

勇者  
で  
あ  
る

Washio Sumi  
wa YUSHA  
de aru

written by  
タカヒロ  
(みなとそふと)

Illustration  
BUNBUN

鷲  
尾  
須  
美  
は

鷲尾須美は  
勇者である

TVアニメ

「結城友奈は勇者である」  
の2年前の世界——  
先代の勇者達の戦いを  
描くイラストノベル

そして  
多くの場合、  
その  
結末は——。

これは、  
三人の勇者の物語。  
神に選ばれた少女達の  
おとぎ話。  
いつだって、  
神に見初められるのは  
無垢なる少女である。

# Chapter 1: Washio Sumi

タカヒロ氏×BUNBUN氏が描く  
少女と勇気の物語

イラストノベル連載スタート

鷺尾須美は  
勇者である

作/タカヒロ  
イラスト/BUNBUN

第1話 「わしおすみ」

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**CENSORED**

*When I heard that we were chosen by the Shinju-sama [\[1\]](#), I thought that was an amazing thing, but exactly how it was amazing, I didn't really realize.*

*Just that, once I heard that the enemies that were coming would destroy the world, I thought, I must fight.*

*In the beginning, I lost myself in that feeling.*

*At that time, that I would end up turning ■■■■ into ■■■■ to keep fighting on, it never even occurred to me in my dreams.*

*Hero's memoir [\[2\]](#) 298.4.25*

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Washio Sumi wakes up at 5 o'clock every morning and goes to the well in her backyard. Using that well's water to cleanse her body was her daily routine. It's cold, but thanks to that, her mind and body become tense. After that, she walks for several minutes to a shrine, and gives her prayer. She gets along well with the cat on the stairs in the shrine's ground. She even gave him a name in her mind. After she comes home, she starts making breakfast. Cooking was her hobby.

—I won't be satisfied if I don't get to eat rice in the morning.

While saying that, she skillfully handles the kitchen knife. In the Washio family, the parents prefer Western-style breakfast. Their daughter, Sumi, can't stand that fact. To her, a breakfast with rice and miso soup is supreme.

"I'm dissatisfied with what my parents make, so I will take up the responsibility of making breakfast myself".

She, who is so diligent, came up with that clear policy. For a while now, Sumi's parents have been enjoying her breakfast. Her plan of converting their taste from Western-style to Japanese-style has been a success.

—Thanks for the meal.

After finishing breakfast and getting ready, all that's left is going to school like



always.

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Shinju palace, 6th year, class 1. That is the name of Sumi's school building and class. Like everything in this world that has "Shinju" in its name, this school has high prestige. The building's structure is not different to that of a normal school, however, its security is very strict, and hygiene is thoroughly managed to every nook and corner.

—Hello.

Sumi greets with a calm voice and enters her class.

—Washio-chan, hello.

—Helloo.

Also having good upbringing and dignity, the classmates returned her greeting properly. Sumi liked her classmates. She talks with both the boys and the girls in the same way. Even though she doesn't have a lover, it's still a fulfilling school life.

...Nonetheless, even though Sumi is an honor student, she is still a child. Among the 30 classmates, there're two people that she just doesn't know how to deal with... Both of them are girls. One of them, right this moment, was laying her face flat on the desk next to Sumi.

—Zzz... munyamunya... my bacon

It's such a clear morning and yet, that classmate is sleeping. If you asked Sumi what she thought of it, she would make a face and say "such a slug".

(... B-but there're times when you're sleepy in the morning... it can't be helped...) And so, Sumi told herself.

She doesn't want to nitpick about her classmate's behavior. Sumi felt ashamed for scolding over such a trivial matter. Because this classmate, who is sleeping next to her, makes her feel that way, she isn't fond of her.

Suddenly, that classmate's body starts to move.

—Awawa! I'm sorry, mom!

Screaming, she abruptly stood up.

The class went silent.

—...huh? I'm not at home?...?

While still half asleep, the girl talked to herself.

—This is the classroom, in the morning, before homeroom starts, Nogi-san.

Sumi calmly retorted and... At that, the class busted with laughter.

—Awawawa...

Being laughed at by everyone, the girl next to her turned bright red and sat down.

In contrast to her refined features, that clumsy girl is Nogi Sonoko. Even within the organization that supports this country - Taisha - the Nogi household's voice holds an unimaginable influence, and yet, that girl was always spacing out.

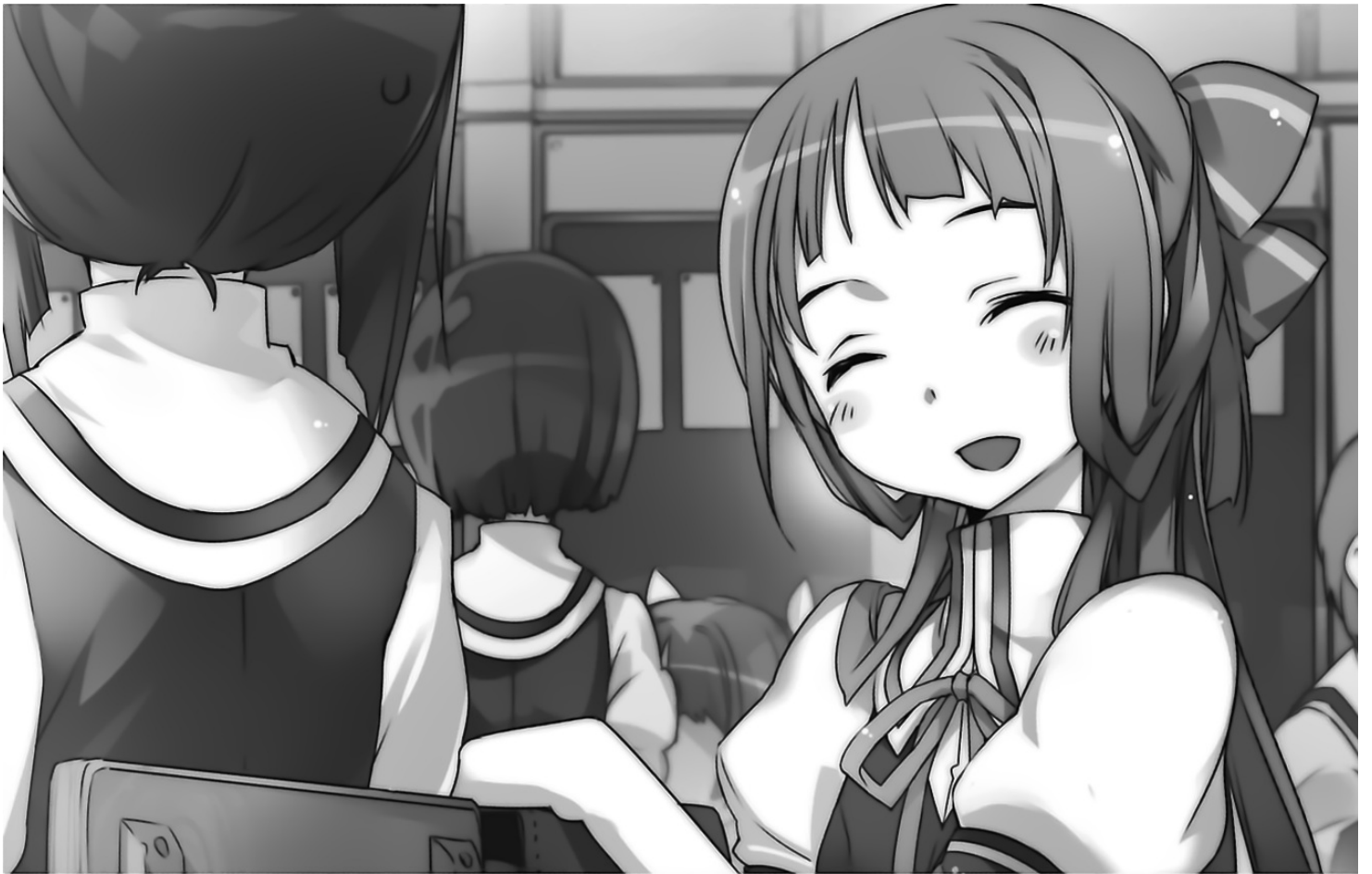
—Ahh... I've gone and done it, huh?

Sumi glanced at an embarrassed grinning Sonoko.

Sonoko noticed her gaze.

—Sumisuke, morning?

With a voice like she's out of breath, she greets.



—Ahem. Morning, Nogi-san.

Sumi properly returned her greeting.

In any case, greetings are important. If you don't greet people, the Shinju-sama will get angry. The children are all brought up with that teaching.

—Say, Nogi-san, my nickname is not Sumisuke, though.

—Ah, maybe Shiosumi is better?

—That's not the problem here...

—You also don't have to call me Nogi-san, just call me however you like. For example, Nogii?

—It's too English sounding...

Sonoko's just peacefully grinning. Looks like she means absolutely no harm when giving other people strange nicknames. Because of that, it's hard to deal with her. Being with such a peaceful girl in your daily life is not a problem.

Another reason why Sumi is not fond of Sonoko is that Sonoko has the same "duty" as herself. She's worried that Sonoko can't carry out that holy duty with her personality.

In the meantime, the homeroom teacher finally arrived. The teacher was a cold woman in her mid 20s. She was usually strict and was feared by the kids. However, the students didn't hate her because they understood her love for them. The usual morning class activities are about to start.

Exactly when the person on duty was about to raise commands...

—Marniiiiing! I-I made it!

A student rushed in after the teacher.

—Minowa-san, no, you didn't make it.

The homeroom teacher lightly tapped the attendance record on the girl's head, whose name was Minowa. It's what she always does when warning students. It's a bad habit. A long time ago, her action might have raised up the



corporal punishment issue, but it was no problem now. In this era, as long as it is not excessive, corporal punishment is allowed.

Again, everyone in class busted out laughing.



The girl called Minowa quickly went to her seat. Minowa's seat was a bit away from Sumi's. Right after she sat down, Minowa started talking with the other classmates.

—Hey, why are you late, Gin-chan?

—Well, after you become a 6th year, a lot of things happen.

—Ehh, what the heck?

The place around where she sat suddenly became cheerful. This is Minowa Gin's appeal, abysmal cheerfulness.

—Awah! This is bad, I forgot my textbook.

—Ahaha, Gin-chan, why did you even come to school?

"Even if you say abysmal, isn't this still too much?" or so, Sumi always thinks. She looked like she was saying "Pull yourself together already". It would be fine if Minowa was just another classmate. Rather, she would even like her cheerfulness.

However, Minowa was like her and Nogi. She's tasked a very, very important duty, the three of them were the same. Just like the Nogi household, the Minowa household also had great power within Taisha. She wanted her to be more self-aware of that fact.

Now that the incident had ended, the person on duty pulled themselves together and raised commands: —Rise.

The students stood up.

—Bow.

The students bowed their heads.

—Pray.

While keeping their heads down, the students clasped their hands together.

—Thanks to the Shinju-sama, we're alive today.

They offered words of gratitude to the Shinju-sama.

—Sit down.

With that, the students finally sat down.

The school timetable contains lots of morals and Shinto lessons, that's the unique feature of this era. The ever so serious Sumi took each lesson earnestly, and sometimes reminded her neighbour, Sonoko, to stop spacing out. In break times, she chatted with her friends, played the recorder with them, sometimes, she went to the library or the computer room, *etc.* She spent her time in a relatively mild way.

Incidentally, Minowa Rin belonged to the sports-oriented community. She was always playing in the schoolyard. Speaking of Nogi Sonoko, she was always dizzying around. She could talk with anyone, and could suddenly sleep anytime. It looked like she was enjoying her slow life to the fullest.

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Lunch break was about to end. To prepare for the next class, Sumi stopped chatting with her classmates, and returned to her seat.

(In order to fulfill my duty, I have got training this evening... Ok, let's do my best.) The moment she thought that...

Boom! A big shock wrapped up her surroundings. At the same time, her classmates' movements suddenly stopped.

—? Everyone?

For a moment, Sumi couldn't understand what was happening. She tried to call out to the classmates in front of her eyes. However, there were no answers or any stupid reactions.

—This is... Don't tell me!

Standing up with a clank, Sumi looked around. As expected, all movements had been stopped. Falling chopsticks were staying still in mid-air. Even the clock's second hand was completely halted.

—It's here, the time to carry out my duty...

Time stopping signaled the start of the duty. Everything was according to what she had been taught.



—Hey, hey, are the enemies coming now!?

Running from the schoolyard, Gin's expression changed as she jumped in.

—Minowa-san... you can move.

—Since you can also move, Washio-san, I guess it's really time for our duty.

While the two were talking seriously...

—Fuuaah...

They heard an unconcerned voice.

—So sleepy... Did I fall asleep again...?

Nogi Sonoko woke up from her nap.

—Huh? Huh huh huh?

Sonoko sensed the strange atmosphere of her surroundings.

—Am I dreaming? Munya...

—Don't sleep!!

—Hauah!?

To the airheaded Sonoko who was about fall asleep again, both Sumi and Gin retorted at the same time.

—Time's stopped. After this, if I remember correctly...

—Due to the Shinju-sama's power, the earth will be transformed to Jukai [\[3\]](#)

Sumi calmly answered Gin's question.

Her heart was pounding like it was going to leap out but... this was just a phenomenon that her parents and Taisha had told her about many times. Even though it came surprisingly sooner than expected, the three of them were the beings that the Shinju-sama had chosen to do this duty.

In that case, they just had to do what they had been taught.

—All we have to do is become "heroes" and intercept the "enemies".

To encourage her trembling self, Washio Sumi clenched her fist tightly.



On the school's rooftop, three people stood. However, at that moment, it was impossible to tell how far the school's premises stretched to. The scenery stretching out before the girls' eyes, in short, was like a strange space from a fairytale. Humans, buildings, almost everything had turned into trees and shrubs. Originally, this land had already been covered with many trees, but in this moment, it had completely changed into a tree land.

Gin surveyed her surroundings and muttered.

—Umm, I can't tell where is where anymore, everything is trees... I don't even know where my own house is. Hey, Washio-san, do you know where Ines is?

Ines was a huge shopping mall in front of the station. They said that you could buy anything and everything at Ines. Many families also spent their weekends there.

—You don't need to worry about Ines at a time like this.

Reflexively, Sumi retorted.

—But it'd be a huge problem if Ines disappeared; even the public hall is inside there.

—It's okay. After we repel the enemies, Jukaika will return to normal.

As if to persuade herself, Sumi said. Looking at the direction where the Washio's house was. That place, naturally, was also just a part of the sea of trees.

—So beautiful... So this is Jukai created by the Shinju-sama's power~

Nogi Sonoko was always an airhead no matter the time.

—This is beautiful...? Well, I guess you could say it's beautiful, but not a fascinating scenery. I might have actually panicked if I hadn't heard about it first...

—Right, I think so too...

For once, Sumi shared the same opinion as Gin.

—Ah, hey. The big bridge is still there in one piece~

Sonoko pointed at the town's symbol, a super-gigantic bridge.



—You're right. It's rooted to some degree but the pattern is still there. Maybe it's because it's connected with the other side?

—Well, it's easy to tell this way. Our duty is to protect that big bridge so we just have to go there.

—It's easy to tell where the Shinju-sama is too~

At the back of the sea of trees stood the the Divine Tree. It was a big tree glowing with a godly light.

—Now, it's about time...!

As Minowa Gin took out her portable terminal, her expression stiffened. As they'd planned to win since the beginning, the girls froze their expressions. Sonoko and Sumi nodded. Despite their abnormal situation, the three didn't complain or show any sights of discontent. Because the adults had told them countless times that "This is a very honourable duty which you should be proud of". "You have been chosen by the Shinju-sama, you have nothing to fear". Believing the adults, the three children started the operation written in their portable terminals. From training, their bodies knew how to do it.

Even though their training was insufficient, the three could still start up the app that had been distributed to them. In order to fight against the enemies, Taisha borrowed the Shinju's power and created this app, the Hero System. All at once, the three tapped their transformation icons. Simultaneously, the girls were enveloped in light.

Using the Divine Tree's power, the hero forms were patterned after plants. The tree girls all bloomed into different flowers.

Washio Sumi, so to speak, was the flower of Prim.

Nogi Sonoko, so to speak, was the flower of Elegance.

Minowa Gin, so to speak, was the flower of Passion.

Each of the three changed into her own unique combat gear. At the same time, enormous power overflowed from their bodies.

Since their power came from the Divine Tree that gods dwelled in, it was a matter of fact. It could be said that the Hero form was the embodiment of the

gods' power. The three in Sumi's group were chosen to use this power by the Divine Tree.

—Let's go, to the bridge!

Crossing dozens of meters in one leap, the three girls headed for the bridge. The enemies would come from the other side and pass by this bridge.

The enemies would come to this town, which was right at the entrance of Shikoku. And so, it was natural for humanity to station people chosen by the Divine Tree... in other words, the three Hero girls, at this place.

The three girls positioned themselves at the middle of the bridge.

—Well then, it should come here soon.

To warm up, Gin swung her weapons, two axes, around. Sonoko's one was a spear. And Sumi had a bow as her weapon. Conveniently, their weapons' ranges were close - mid - long, and so together, they formed a balanced party.

—You two, let's fight calmly.

Sumi instructed the other two. Despite her calm voice, Sumi was fired up. To protect this beautiful country. To protect her important family. To protect her irreplaceable friends.

Her weapon type was the one with the lowest risk. She didn't want to be a burden to her two comrades who used axes and a spear. Maybe when she could control the arrows properly, she would be able start attacking at the front. Practically, Gin's eagerness was dangerously high while Sonoko was always spacing out, so she couldn't rely on them.

(I will do my best. I will defeat it! I will protect them...!) Sumi fired herself up one more time.

It appeared from the other side of the bridge. With a very strange and huge body. Neither a life form nor an inorganic object. A nearly inorganic, 10 meters high grotesque silhouette was crossing over the bridge.

—That is the thing that comes from the other side... The enemy... “Vertex”.

Sumi gulped.

She had been told about the format of the Vertexes’ actions.

1. They attack humans.
2. They don’t attack anything other than humans.
3. Normal weapons hardly have any effect on them.
4. Heroes with the god’s power are able to go against them.
5. The enemies’ goal is the Divine Tree. They’re planning to destroy it.

To mankind, no.5 was the most dangerous.

The Divine Tree, which the Taisha worshipped, blessed everything in this world. If the Divine Tree was destroyed, it would be the downfall of mankind. It was early to say, but if they couldn’t stop the enemy’s advance now, it would be the end of everything. When time froze like this, Sumi’s group, the chosen heroes, were the only ones that could move. They definitely couldn’t be allowed to let the enemy reach the Divine Tree. No matter what happened, they had to stop it here.

Sumi nocked an arrow to the bow, and took a firing stance. But before her, like a gale, Gin charged at the enemy. At that time, from Gin’s body, red flower petals danced in the air. Sonoko was unintentionally fascinated by that sight.

—! You can’t, we have to check its power first...

Panicking, Sumi couldn’t provide covering fire before Gin reached the enemy.

—Take thiiiiiiiiis!!!

Roaring, Gin gave the enemy a big cut.

—Wahh, you’re so amazing, Mino-san!

Impressed, Sonoko clapped her hands.

—Mino-san, uh... Stop calling me that! Anyway, this thing is surprising fragile, I can do it!!

As if dancing, Gin swung her axes and in a blink, the enemy was sliced.

—You can't neglect your defense, Minowa-san. That is-





For just a moment, her vision was blurred. In that moment, the slashed part on the Vertex's body was completely regenerated. Without a moment of delay, Sumi shot the arrow.

—Uwaah... Crap!

Gin took a big jump back. However, like it wanted to devour Gin, the enemy also pressed forward. As a result, Sumi's arrow missed the target.

—Why is it so fast...!?

Furthermore, as its first attack, the Vertex sent out one of its huge water balls pressing after Gin. She ended up getting trapped in it.

—...!!

From the inside, Gin attempted to break the ball with her battleaxes. However, it wasn't even shaken. When Sumi tried to shoot it, the water ball just repelled her arrows. At this rate, Gin would drown to death. Yet again, the enemy sent out its other water ball after Sonoko.

—Wahh!?

In a panic, Sonoko dodged it, but then, the water ball increased its speed and homed in on her. They could feel the killing intent coming from the enemy very clearly.

—Nogi-san! Fall back further!

Sumi shouted. However, Sonoko was...

—Ah! I've got a good idea!

And so, she came charging back at the water ball. Then in front of the water ball, she held up her spear and quickly rotated it. As the embodiment of the gods' power, it was easy for the girls to create a tornado by just rotating a spear. The water ball got blown up by the wind.

—...! Nogi-san!

The moment Sumi got astonished by Sonoko's clever action, the enemy behind her was blown faraway.

—Hah... Hah... Uhh~ I feel sick.

It was Gin who had splendidly hurled it away.

—D-don't tell me, Minowa-san... Did you drink up the water that you were trapped in?

As the embodiment of the gods' power, it was possible for them to drink up a large volume of water... Although, no one would do it, normally.

—Mino-san, are you okay?

Sonoko ran up to Gin.

—Yeah, it tasted like Cider at first but then suddenly changed to an Oolong-like flavor, so I got tired of drinking it.

—Ah, I didn't ask for a drink review... but I'm glad that you're alright~

—Watch out, you two!!

Sumi shot an arrow at each of the two girls who were trying to catch a breath. Before they were shot, the two jumped out of the way. Where the girls just were, the enemy came crashing down with all its strength. Again, a clear killing intent.

—So close... Thanks, Washio-san. You enemy...!!

—Eeeei!!

Gin and Sonoko attacked from both sides. Sumi immediately supported them.

While firing rapidly, Sumi was being struck with admiration. Like a raging fire, Gin's rush of assaults was amazing, but Sonoko's spearwork was also something worth watching. She mostly aimed and thrust at the enemy's joints, or rather, its tender spots. The large body started to sway.

(Minowa-san and Nogi-san are both so skillful!)

Because their weapon types differed greatly from each other, all of their trainings for the duty up until now had been done individually. The three would only start training together after this, so Sumi had no idea that the other heroes were this good.

The three girls' assault was like surging waves. Receiving that, the enemy drew faraway. However, it immediately regenerated the damaged parts completely.

—Uwaa, this is endless... but I won't lose~!

—Me too, I can still do it! But honestly, I'm about to get tired!

—Keep up that spirit, you two. Minowa-san, don't tell the enemy what you really think!

Even then, it was the girls' duty to not let the enemy pass this place, so they kept at the guard and remained at the center of the bridge. Then, the huge enemy... started to turn back from the advanced route and returned the way it came from. It seemed like they had been able to send it back.

In the first place, the girls' mission was to intercept the enemies, not defeat them. Holding back the invasion was their victory condition. Of course it would be better if they could defeat the enemies, but... right now, with mankind's current experience, it was impossible to do so.

—...

The three girls kept glaring at the back of the enemy until they couldn't see it anymore. And soon, it completely disappeared from their vision...

The girls had successfully repelled the enemy. Their victory had been ascertained.

—We did it!!!

The three hugged each other. Just like a kid her age, Sumi also shouted with all her mind. They had fought desperately, and had been able to protect the Divine Tree and mankind. It was a great joy for the girl.



—Well! Honestly, I was really scared, but I still did it somehow!

—Eh, was that how you act when scared, Mino-san? Actually, my heart was pounding so hard too~

—Me too... I was actually very worried...

It was only then that the three finally let their true feelings come out. Even if they had been prepared for it, they still were little girls.

—In any case, we won so it's all good!

Gin jumped up happily.

—Ahaha, Mino-san's jump is so high!

—Yay yay!

Sonoko and Gin high-fived in high spirits. Meanwhile, Sumi was (Aren't they being too noisy...? I-isn't this... a bit disgraceful...?) Now that she had finally cooled down, Sumi pressed her hands to her cheeks, feeling embarrassed.

They didn't defeat the enemy. They only drew it away. However, their victory this time was still a huge first step for humanity. Since they had been at their wits' end up until now.

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Sumi took an examination at her school infirmary. It wasn't a normal infirmary. It was specially conducted so that the heroes could be given proper examination after fighting.

—Thank you, Washio-san. You did really well. Your memories about the fight would help us greatly in our analysis of the enemies.

The normally strict homeroom teacher, now, was giving her a good petting.

—Thank you very much, it was all thanks to Minowa-san and Nogi-san.

—I'm sorry that the attack came much sooner than expected. From now on, we're planning to let you train with each other.

(! That's right, to prepare for the actual fights from now on, I have to train properly.) Sumi decided.

—No abnormalities, no injuries. Minowa-san has ingested some liquid so she has to remain for some more detailed checkup, but Nogi-san and Washio-san, you two can go home now.

After properly bidding farewell to the people that have examined her, Sumi left the place.

Sumi and Sonoko walked side by side until the school's front gate. Normally, they would part ways here. However, now that the enemies had started to arrive, there was a problem that needed to be addressed.

Namely, teamwork.

They had gotten into a pinch this time because at the beginning, they'd all acted on their own.

(Just completing the training properly is not enough. We have to have more control next time... We have to get along with each other normally. In order to defend this country.) Seriously, like obligated, Sumi called out to Sonoko.

—Hey, Nogi-san, if you like, umm... Today, for having fulfilled our great duty, do you want to throw a victory party with me...?

Talking like a teenager, Sumi invited Sonoko. Sonoko's face immediately lit up.

—Yes! Let's go, let's go!

She took Sumi's hand and shook it firmly.

—Thank you. Just now, I kept thinking about inviting you all the time, Shiosumi, but couldn't actually say it... I am really happy now~

—S-so you are the same, Nogi-san...

—You know, Mino-san was amazing today! Exactly like a kamikaze officer! And then, your sniping was so precise, Shiosumi, I got all excited!

—I-I see...

—Alright, then let's go to the food court at Ines, and with Mino-san next time, of course.

Sonoko kept pulling Sumi around.

Looking at the way that girl innocently skipped around, Sumi started to feel embarrassed herself. After they won the battle, Sonoko also said that she was nervous while on “duty”. And that she was able to judge the spear skills she had learned in actual combat. She herself took up the responsibility and faced her “duty” properly. A respectable kind soul. She was glad that she didn’t have to consciously force a connection with her comrade. She thought they could become closer normally. Sumi regretted that she had thought of her badly before and hadn’t talked with her sooner.

—I’m fine with going to the food court but Nogi-san, can you please stop calling me Shiosumi...?

—Eh... then... then... How about Wasshiina...? Doesn’t it sound like an idol’s name?

—Um, no, not that one... Nogi-san, you also would not like it if I called you Sonokorin, right?

—Wah, so lovely.

—I’m sorry, please forget it.

—Ah, I know. Wasshii! How about that?

—Umm. Well, I guess I’ll just have to get used to it.

—Please take care of me, Wasshii!

Sonoko clasped her hands around Sumi tightly. Strangely, Sumi didn’t hate that feeling. The two of them, skipping happily towards Ines. Not as heroes, but just as two girls their age.

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*This is a story about three heroes. A fairytale about the girls chosen by god.*

*At any time, there’ll be a girl who will get to meet god for the first time and become purified.*

*And in many cases, the result is ■■■■.*

*(Chapter 1: End)*



## Chapter 2: Minowa Gin



鷺尾須美は  
勇者である

第2話 「みのわぎん」

作/ タカヒロ  
イラスト/ BUNBUN

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**CENSORED**

*When I first saw Minowa Gin, I had the feeling that I would have trouble dealing with her.*

*She was loud, strong-willed, overpowering.*

*But as we felt each other out I thought she was a really nice girl.*

*That she would be ■■■■, and ■■■■ was.....*

*Hero's memoir 298.5.15*

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Depending on the situation, Minowa Gin's morning might start early. Since she had to take care of her newborn baby brother.

—Hey there, even if our ages are far apart, aren't you still the great Gin-sama's brother?

While looking at the baby's eyes, Gin spoke.

—Uuh... ugh...

—Like I said, don't cry. You can only cry when you realize that the New Year's money mom keeps for you will never return.

Happily, Gin tried to make a joke.

—Uee... *sob*

—Ahh, now he started grumbling... Seems like it's not because of milk or nappy...

Even when they aren't dissatisfied with anything, babies can often just keep whining for a long time like a smolder. She knew that fact very well.

—First, I put you on my lap...

After letting the kid take a hold of the ringing toy, she started humming. And just like that, the little brother cheered up. She was used to this.

—Ohh, you stopped crying. Good job, Mai Buraza.

Once he stopped crying, she praised him. Then, the baby's face lit up and he laughed happily.

—What a spoiled brother. I'm gonna make you my underling and work your butt off when you grow up, nihihi.

While looking after her lovely brother, time flew by, and before she knew it...

—Heu! Crap~ I'm late I'm late!!

The girl hurried off to school.

According to the education policy of Shinju-kan, the school that Sumi's group commutes to, students from grade 4th and above are allowed to buy and eat sweets themselves. Through that, kids from the age of 10 start to learn how to use money. The morale among the children at Shinju-kan is uniquely high. And with the school's free spirit, students always feel welcomed there.

In any case, Sumi, Sonoko, and Gin were all 6th graders.

At the food court inside the huge shopping mall Ines, the three were eating sweets together. It was another victory celebration party for being able to drive away the invading enemy.



—How's that? How's that? This place's gelato is dang good, right? I, the Ines maniac, recommended it, after all.

With shining eyes, Gin enthusiastically spoke.

—It's the best, the best, Mino-san. Crêpes are nice too but I never thought gelato would also be this good~

With tears on her eyes, Sonoko stuffed her cheeks with gelato.

—Ahaha, why are you crying over this, Nogi-san?

—It's just, that time when I went to a department store with mom, I got to eat a really delicious crêpe, and I thought no other sweets could taste better than that. So this really is a new discovery~ I'm crying with happiness~

—Did you never come here to eat with your buddies?

—I don't have many friends~... Ah, but I came here with Wasshii last time! She invited me out, you know. Right~ Wasshii...

—...

Sumi was frowning, and having a staring contest with her gelato.

—Why is Washio-san being all serious with her gelato?

—Don't you like gelato, Wasshii?

—It's not that I don't like it... This Uji red bean flavor gelato... is really delicious...

Sumi answered with a meek look.

—Yay. I'm glad that you like it.

—If that's the case, then why are you frowning~?

—I'd like to only have Japanese sweets for snacks. But now, my belief is... being slightly swayed by this flavor, it's just so miserable...

Sumi didn't like things with names written in katakana.

—Somehow, what Wasshii is saying sounds so complicated.

—Isn't it fine as long as it's tasty?

—That's right~ Hafuu, this is happiness... I was right to choose melon flavor~

—Y-you're right. Certainly, if I keep being so close minded, it might become fatal in combat. I'll honestly enjoy this now.

After being told by the other two, Sumi started stuffing her cheeks quietly.

—The bitterness of Matcha interweaves with the sweetness of red bean... a perfect harmony... um, um...

With a smile of a girl her age, she kept moving her mouth.

—Fufu, somehow, Washio-san is really funny!

—Right~ I thought she'd be more of a scary person~

"Excuse me, I'm not scary, I'm just serious" Sumi thought, but because the gelato was too delicious, she decided to just keep eating for the time being.

—Somehow, looking at the way Wasshii eats, Uji red bean flavor seems also really good...

Sonoko turned to look at Sumi with hungry eyes.

—Then just ask her for a bite. Washio-san, please give her one.

Gin nonchalantly said so.

—Uh, umm~, this is my first time doing something like this so I'm a bit nervous, but it's also something I've longed for, so I'll accept your kind offer and... thanks for the meal~

After her solo talk, Sonoko opened her mouth saying "Ahh".

(...!?)





On the other side, Sumi was freezing. To her, who was raised in a very strict family, the act of feeding someone going “Ahh” like that was against etiquette. But Nogi Sonoko had closed her eyes and went into waiting mode already. She couldn’t say anything that would worsen their team work. Sumi took a spoon of her gelato, and timidly put it into Sonoko’s mouth.

—...momu... umu, un, it’s good~

Sonoko’s face lit up.

—Well then, you try mine too, Wasshii.

After saying that, Sonoko took a spoon of her melon gelato and held it up in front of Sumi.

—Wasshi, say “ahh”, ahh~

(...!?)

Sumi’s thoughts froze once again. This time, she was the one being told to go “Ahh” in public.

(Isn’t this disgraceful?)

However, the glittering melon color in front of her eyes was so fascinating, and moreover, looking at Sonoko’s happy face, she couldn’t refuse.

—A-Ahh...

And thus, Sumi was fed in front of the general public.

—You guys look so innocent. Are you two lovers?!

Gin commented while laughing.

—Melon flavor... is also delicious.

—Right, right~

—Fufun, certainly, both Uji red bean and melon flavor have super-fantastic taste. But you know, the strongest flavor in this entire food court is what I’m eating, soy sauce gelato. This is definitely number one.

After saying that, Gin shoved her soy sauce gelato into Sumi and Sonoko’s mouth.

—How's it? How's it? Did it hit your spot, Nogi-san?

—Uumm~ It's a complicated flavor~

—Eh?

—It does taste good but maybe this flavor is intended for adults.

—Ehhh? Even you, Washio-san?

Gin's recommendation, the soy sauce gelato, didn't get received as well as she had thought.

\*\*\*

After their meal, the three went up to Ines' rooftop. A nice view of the town before the ocean stretched out in front of the girls' eyes. The inland sea, the big bridge, and the wall enclosing Shikoku were all its characteristics.

—Hey, you two weren't well-acquainted with the food court, but are you guys the type that just don't come to Ines much?

—Yes. Up until now, I haven't really thought about coming here at all...

—For me, to begin with, my family did not forbid me from buying sweets and going to Ines. But ever since I was chosen as a hero, everything is OK~

—Hehh, that's so sad. Ines is this town's biggest amusement center. It's truly a waste to not know anything about it!

—The biggest... more like, there's no other amusement center around...

—You should just call Wasshii "Wasshii"~...

—I don't think that's something you can decide, Sonocchi.

—Say, while I was being examined for drinking the enemy's water, how come you two got so close like that? Even though your seats are next to each other in class, you guys almost never talked before.

—Since the beginning, I had always wanted to talk with her more~

—The enemies are coming now, so it's best to deepen the relationships with your comrades.

—Grr. What I mean to say is, what I mean to say is, let's me join in, too!!

Gin placed her arms around the other two's shoulders solidly.

—We ate at the same table already, we're all buddies now.

—B-buddies! That means "friends" right? Are you going to become my friend, Mino-san?

—Of course, Nogi-san... no, Sonoko.

—Uwa~ Being called by name, I'm so happy! I've made two friends one after another. What do they call this? Like having both New Year and O-Bon in one sitting~? \*correct version: Like O-Bon and New Year rolled into one.

Sonoko was smiling from ear to ear happily.

She was the daughter of the Nogi household which had tremendous authority and assets even within Taisha. Since she was cherished at home, up until being chosen as a Hero, she couldn't go out as she pleased, and so that girl had very few friends.

This time, Gin fixed her eyes on Sumi. Those eyes, just like her personality, were sparkling burningly.

—It's fine for me to call you "Sumi", right?

—Yes. I'll also, ahem... call you "Gin".

—Your care, I'm in! Sumi, Mai Furendo!

Sumi didn't hate the feeling of having Gin come pushing against her. When she first met Gin, she thought her personality was somewhat over-familiar, but now that Gin came pushing against her, she was unexpectedly happy about it. Furthermore, Sumi definitely couldn't get close to someone just like she did. She respected Gin for having the boldness that she herself didn't.

—We already talked about it but Gin, you drank the enemy's water, right? ... Is your body okay?

—My condition is super-duper. I did quite a number of tests and they all said "negative".

—I'm glad~ So we'll all sortie next time too~

—I'm with you, Sonoko.

Gin pointed at the big bridge from the rooftop.

—We're gonna fight there again. You better be careful not to be blown up, big bridge.

—The big bridge is this town's symbol after all, we've got to protect it~

Sumi cleared her throat with a cough.

—We're also going to train with each other from now on. It's going to be tough, but since it's all for this important duty... Let's go at it with everything we have!

—Nihi, you sure have concluded this nicely, Sumi.

—10 o'clock tomorrow, at Taisha subdivision's training area right~?

—It's so bothersome to have training on a day off, but if we let the enemies destroy the Shinju-sama then the world will be in ruins, gotta be fired up and give it our all.

—You're right... However, Gin...

—Umm? What? Sumi.

—Sometimes, how should I put this, your wording is really amazing...

—I'm bad at acting refined, since I'm clumsy.

—It doesn't have anything to do with being skillful, though.

—Ah, you got me, huh?

—Ahahaha~ It's like I'm watching a manzai~

The three of them stayed gazing at the slowly darkening town.

\*\*\*

—...She said "I swear" but now she is late again!?

At Taisha's training area, Sumi was furious. It had been one week since the time they played on Ines' rooftop. Now that the joint training had begun, Gin had been coming late once every three times.

—Sorry, sorry, I'm late!

Gin came rushing towards the training area. Today, she was late by 8 minutes. It wasn't much, but being late is still being late.

—Gin. So why are you late today?

Sumi, who was very strict with rules, asked for the reason. She was so angry that it looked like on her head, horns had grown out.

—Umm... no, whatever I say now it was still my fault that I'm late... Sorry, I'll be more careful!

Just like this, Gin always gave her the same answer every time. Without saying the reason, she just apologized.

—You have to be more aware of your position as a Hero. We must protect this country and...

With her older mental age, Sumi started preaching. Sumi was always on standby 20 minutes before training, while Sonoko came 5 minutes early.

—... Zzz... Crêpes... you're also delicious~

Even though sometimes, just like now, Sonoko fell asleep in the middle of training.

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After finishing training, Sumi stayed pondering intently.

—Why does Gin keep coming late from time to time?... We have to investigate this, there's no point if we can't figure out the cause and sever off its root. Thinking back, even before becoming a Hero, Gin had been late to school a lot. As I thought, there must be some sort of reason. If she doesn't tell me then I am going to explore it! Sonocchi, would you cooperate with me?

—Zzz... *snore*~

Sonoko was nodding off.

—I see, thank you, Sonocchi.

Sumi forcibly acknowledged the sight of Sonoko nodding in her sleep as the reply. Gradually, she had started to understand how to handle her.

Day off.

Sumi and Sonoko were standing in front of the Minowa household. It took only 15 minutes walking from the school to her house, not too far a distance.

—If there's any problem, we'll have to lend her our strength...

Their intention was to observe Gin's private life. For a good kid like her, this was a horrible behavior. Nevertheless, Sumi still did it. Since a long time ago, she had tended to rush to anything that she had set her heart on.

—I don't know when I agreed to this, but I will do my best~

Sonoko didn't really think deeply about anything. She was just a kid that would work hard for their friends' sake.

Without delay, the two surveyed the surroundings of Minowa's house. From an outsider's perspective, it would just look like two grade school kids were wandering about playing. The Minowa's house wasn't a big stately mansion like the Washio's and Nogi's. Its appearance was just that of a refined Japanese house.

After surveying, Sonoko soon came to understand Gin's situation.

—Look~ Wasshii. That, that.

Sonoko pointed at the courtyard. What appeared before Sumi's eyes was the image of Gin rocking a baby. Sumi had heard that Gin had a little brother, but she had no idea that he was this young.

—...seems like Gin is looking after her brother.

Even though the Minowa household was pretty powerful within Taisha, the family itself wasn't wealthy enough to be able to hire servants. So it seemed like Gin also helped around the house. After a while, Gin started to do other things.

—This time, she is cleaning inside the house~ I have never done something like that before~ She's amazing. Ah, looks like she's going to run an errand now~

The Nogi household wasn't only powerful but also extremely rich, so it

seemed like, to Sonoko, a classmate being able to do housework was something really new.

—She's really a hard worker... Let's try to follow her out on her errand.

...Sonoko and Sumi saw a surprising scene.

In front of Gin, a kid who was riding his bicycle fell down. And naturally, Gin went to help him. After that, an old lady said she had a back pain and sat in front of Gin.

—I-is this the so called~ trouble maker~?

—I guess we have confirmed the reason why she's late...

In order to help Gin, the two ran up to her.

On the way back, after sending the back-pained old lady home: —So you two've been watching me since when I was at home? Uwaa, that's so embarrassing...

—It's not something embarrassing, you're great~

—So you're late because something like this happens every time, huh?

—Well... yeah.

—Then you should have said so~

—Well, then it would seem like it was my brother and the old lady's fault... Whether something happens or not being late is still my own responsibility.

—That's right. No matter the reason, it's still not fine to be late.

—Tohoho... You're quite right, yes.

—Mino-san gets dragged into trouble easily~

—Since long ago... I've been in bad luck. I've never hit a bingo, you know... Tohoho.

—From now on, good things will surely... Hm!?

At the same time, the three noticed the sudden unusualness around them.

—This is... Time is stopping, right~? It's not that my senses suddenly sharpened or something, right~?

—No. It's not that. It's the enemy, Sonocchi.

—They came! My day off is ruined!

In just a moment, Shikoku's appearance transformed into that of Jukai.

(This time, I have got the experience from last time. It's going to be fine... We'll cooperate and effectively repel the enemy.) Sumi told herself.

\*\*\*

The girls transformed into their Hero forms, and just like last time, positioned themselves at the center of the big bridge. Thereupon, an object showed up.

—What the... that form is, a scale?

—The scale is... floating in the air~

The huge, 20 meter-tall enemy, while swaying eerily, came advancing on the bridge.

—Good grief, what kind of living thing is that? So just being born among the virus turns you into something like that, huh?

Setting up her two axes, Gin prepared to attack.

—Act just as practiced. Understand, Gin?

“Don't stick out” or so Sumi warned.

—Got it. It's just, when I see the enemy, I feel an urge to assault them. Sumi, I'm in your care.





Gin, who easily got fired up, was reliable but also dangerous at the same time.

—To begin with, I wonder where its face is~

Speaking of Sonoko, she was carefully observing the enemy's form.

—Return to the other side!

Anyway, Sumi attacked the enemy with her bow and arrows from faraway.

(It would be best if my arrows could finish it.)

Aiming at the enemy, she fired several arrows at the same time. The sound of arrows tearing up the air bursted out, precisely to the mark. Using the Divine Tree's godly power, the firepower of Sumi's tightly drawn bow was like that of missiles, if compared to modern weapons. However, those deadly arrows didn't get through to the enemy this time. Just like a magnet, the arrows were all drawn toward the scale's counterweight part. That counterweight part was considerably hard. Even when pierced by the arrows, it seemed like the enemy was still perfectly fine. That sight was a shock to Sumi.

—One more time... I'll shoot it down!!

Like a tornado, a swirl of arrows headed towards the enemy. Nevertheless, just like last time, the trajectories of Sumi's arrows that were aimed at the scale's head were all unnaturally bended, and ended up hitting the counterweight part. The counterweight part perfectly drew in all the arrows.

(N-no way... I have to fulfill my duty, and yet I can't do anything.) Sumi bit her lip.

Whilst suppressing Sumi's attack, the enemy kept advancing emotionlessly.

—Mino-san, the part connecting the enemy's 2 bodies looks thin, it might be fragile there~...!

—Strike at the connecting joint, huh? Roger!

Synchronizing their breathings, Gin and Sonoko began attacking from both sides of the enemy. And then, in order to swing its weights around, the scale begun slaloming. Its tornado-like defense sent Gin and Sonoko flying.

—Dang, I can't get near it...!

Using the rotation's centrifugal force, the enemy shot back all the arrows that it had drawn in before towards Sumi.

—How can it return my arrows like that!

Sumi quickly twisted her body. Since its aim was bad, it was easy to avoid the arrows, however, many of them went flying towards the Jukai. Then at the impacted places, the trees were damaged.

—The Jukai is...! Because of my arrows...!

She had been told that if Jukai was damaged, then when it returned to normal calamity would befall somewhere in town. In other words, something very grave would happen if Jukai was damaged at an unmanageable level. I was slight this time, but in any case, they had to do their utmost not to damage Jukai at all.

The enemy kept advancing further.

—You... uncanny thing!!

Gin forcibly started attacking, but was flipped away again.

—Damn it, this is pretty bad.

—What should we do? What should we do...?

Compatibility problem aside, her power wasn't of any use at all, and Sumi started panicking slightly. At this rate, they would end up letting the enemy inside Shikoku. At that time, Nogi opened her mouth.

—I got it. Wasshii, Mino-san, a typhoon has an eye right? So even if this rotation's surroundings are resistant... there might be nothing over its head!

—I see, so all I have to do is jump in from above! Sonoko, Naisu Aidea!

—But it is still extremely dangerous to jump in a tornado...

—You don't know that until you try! Sumi, cover for me!

—Gin, wait a minute...!

Right as she said that, Gin leaped up with all her mind.

—Haa Ahhhhhh!!!!!!

Gin raised her voice, and like a meteor, threw herself into the tornado.

A big slashing sound resounded, and the enemy's movement stopped. Gin's axe was stabbed firmly on the scale's head. Cut up by the wind's blade, Gin's entire body was covered in blood. With a shrieking attack, she interrupted the enemy's action. Seeing Gin covered with injuries but still full of aspiration, Sumi felt such relief that she forgot about fighting for a moment.

—Now!!!

Sonoko jumped inside the enemy and started attacking with her spear.

(Oh no, I messed up the timing.)

Coming late for a moment, Sumi got up close to the enemy.

—With this distance, it won't be able to suck up my arrows...!

Sumi began to shoot the scale at point-blank. Even when shot at close range, Sumi's godly arrows still held plenty of power.

As if dancing, Gin manipulated her two axes and cut up the enemy. Then, so that the enemy couldn't rotate anymore, the girls kept up their assault. After a while, whilst still receiving the girls' attacks, the enemy started to change its course and returned to the bridge. Furthermore, a few minutes later, it started to retreat from the bridge. It seemed like the girls were able to drive it away.

After the fight ended, the girls all collapsed on the bridge. They couldn't slow down the assault until the opponent decided to retreat, so their stamina had all ran out now.

—Gin... Are your wounds okay?

—Just how many times have you asked that question? While I'm in this form, they heal a little bit, and there are no deep wounds either. I really am fine.

—I see... I'm sorry. Because my arrows couldn't get through, you had to dive into that, Gin.

—That was a matter of compatibility, don't worry about it. In the first place, considering my weapon type, diving into the target is my job.

—Diving is your job... huh. Perhaps, it would be better if we don't become close...

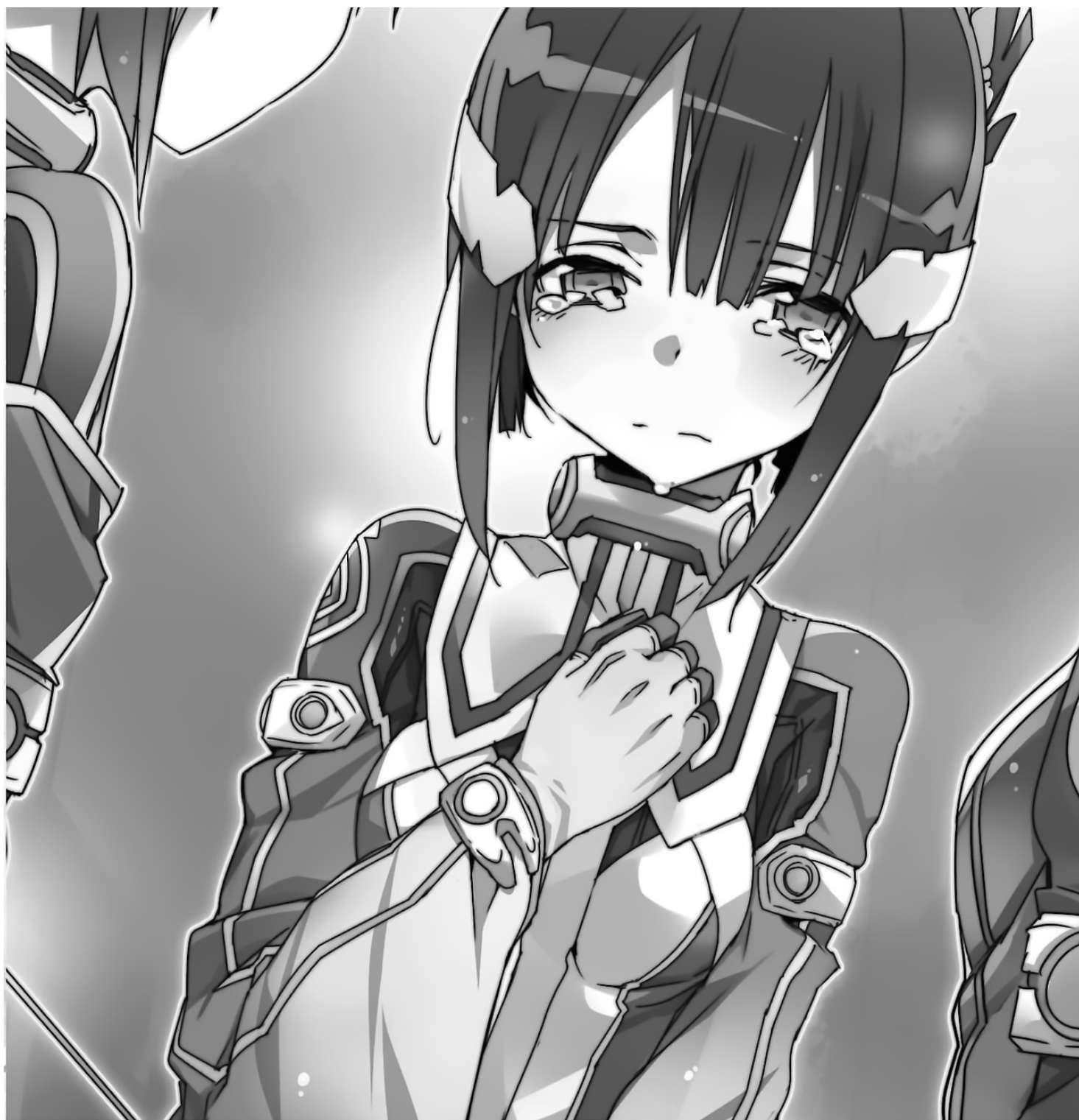
Sumi abruptly said.

—Eh, wha-what's wrong, Wasshii?

—What was that, all of a sudden...?

—...

—...because... when Gin jumped into the tornado, I was so worried... so worried... that my movements became dull...



When they noticed, tears had come running down Sumi's face.

—Sumi...

—Ah, aaa, Wasshii, d-don't cry!

Now that the enemy had gone away, all of her feelings came bursting out. Endlessly, the tears overflowed from her eyes.

How her own arrows had damaged Jukai. How she was being useless for their duty. How she had put Gin in danger because of that. How Gin, who held a good will, was covered in blood.

For the serious Sumi, this mission had brought her too many shocks.

—If only my arrows had been able to get through properly... ugh.

Sonoko grasped Sumi's hand.

—... Sumi.

—Seriously, don't you have any faith in me? My hero system is also especially made for close combat by all those tough guys, you know. It's fine.

Gin started petting Sumi's head.

—...well, I guess me coming late to training so often makes you feel uneasy in the real deal... I got it, I got it, Sumi. I'll leave home earlier. That way, even if trouble happens, I can still make it.

—...Gin.

—So let's get along more, Sumi. When you said we shouldn't become closer earlier, it stabbed me deeply. The enemy's attacks were more bearable than that.

—Yeah, yeah. I thought so too, Wasshii.

—...sorry, I'm sorry...

Gin kept holding Sumi tightly until she stopped crying.

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*The girls' duty continues on.*

*Since the number of enemies is, undoubtedly, as many as the stars.*





# Chapter 3: Nogi Sonoko



第3話 「のぎそのこ」

作/ タカヒロ  
イラスト/ BUNBUN

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鷺尾須美は  
勇者である

**CENSORED**

*1 + 1 + 1 does not equal 3, but becomes 10. If it was us, we thought we could do it. We had to think that way.*

*The enemies are called Vertexes. Abominations born from the center of viruses. We are to repel them.*

*But, to such existences, to give them the name Vertexes...a word meaning the highest point, why...?*

*At that time, the fact that Vertexes were things ■■■■ by ■■■■ was something we still did not know.*

*Hero's memoir 298.6.20*

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Since she was a baby, Nogi Sonoko had been maintaining a slow-paced life. She couldn't help having fun just staring at the ants marching by herself. Because she was like that, Sonoko's parents were a bit worried about their daughter. Sonoko's grandfather commented that she was talented, but it appeared that was not the case.

So one day, as a prank, Sonoko's parents purposely groaned and collapsed in front of their still very young daughter. And then Sonoko bursted into tears. However, she immediately called for help and described their symptoms, the way they had collapsed, and how many seconds had passed since. After that, she kept reassuring her parents that it would be okay, that she had called for help already.

After seeing their daughter like that, from then on, Sonoko's parents didn't say anything even when she kept staring off into the distance.

—Wa~ that cloud, it looks like Wasshii's weapon~

Today too, on the lawn in Shinju-kan's courtyard, while bathing in the wind, Sonoko observed the shapes of the flowing clouds in the sky. The only thing different from before...

—Oh! Now that you said that, it sure does.

—Right~

—So this hobby is the reason why Sonocchi can think up so many good ideas.

...was that she wasn't alone anymore.

Early summer winds blew in from the inland sea. After school, Sumi's group came to the library. Today, they held a study group for Gin. Sumi was constantly instructing her. There was no one other than them there.

—Heyy, rather than study, want to go to Ines first? The food court over there is calling me.

—You can't, Gin.

—Sumi, aren't you too unapproachable?

—What's that? A new character? Come on, concentrate, Gin.

—Yes, yes, Washio-sensei, I got it.

Once again, Gin casted her gaze upon the documents.

By the way, in the meantime, Sonoko was...

—Zzz... Why is Udon so white and delicious~?... Zzz

... dreaming happily.





—Is it fine to leave Sonoko sleeping like that, Washio-sensei?

—That girl is smart... she doesn't look like it, though.

—Damn you prodigy little girl... I'm gonna whisper nothing but noxious insects' names in your ear and make you see a nightmare, ihih.

—You sure come up with such devilish ideas often. What if someone does that to you?

—I'm totally fine with things such as G [\[4\]](#)

—...you're good.

—Because I'm a hero. What about you, Sumi? G

—...Why didn't the virus make them go extinct already? ... I still feel bitter about that.

—Oh, so you're scared of them. Aww, so cuute.

—It's useless to change the subject, Gin. Now, let's go back to studying history. Well then, for what reason does the wall encircling Shikoku exist?

—Even I am not that stupid, the Shinju-sama protects the people in Shikoku using it as a barrier.

—That's right. The Shinju-sama protects us from the deadly virus spreading in the world outside.

—Well, this is not in the textbook, but the enemies born from the sea of virus... are called Vertexes, aren't they?

—Yes. The natural enemy of mankind comes from the other side to destroy the Shinju-sama... Repelling them is the duty of us Heroes.

—Hey, even I understand that perfectly. Now, let's go to Ines. If I don't go to Ines, I can't calm down.

It seems like the huge shopping mall, Ines, has already become an absolute necessity for everybody living in the region.

—The study session is still not over.

—Aua...

—Fufu. I think I like your troubled face, Gin.

—Kyaa, somehow, Sumi started saying scary things.

—Knowing history is very important, so you have to be precise until the end. Well then, why do we fight Vertexes? Does it have to be us, the Heroes?

—Again, why are they all things not in the textbook? Because normal weapons are not effective, right? Because of that, we talked to the Shinju-sama, and got to divide up the Divine Tree's power... that was the birth of the Hero system.

Existences that don't prey upon humans, but commence attacks just to kill. With the objective of destroying the Divine Tree and making the world collapse. To go against such demons, there's no choice but to borrow the power of the God.

—I'm glad that you seem to understand that much. Since you only got 52 points for the short test, I held this urgent study group, but looks like you're going to be fine.

—Well, it's ab-ridi-surd-culous for a hero not to know the history related to herself.

—Sonocchi doesn't look like she knows, though...

—Well, Sonoko got a 0 for the short test after all.

Incidentally, Sumi got 92 points.

—It was a 0 but... that was because she messed up the filling method of the answer sheet. If conversed to the official form then she would have gotten full marks, you know? She's amazing.

—O~ou. A paper-thin difference huh? In various ways.

Unaware of the two's gazes, Sonoko kept sleeping peacefully.

—Mino-san... I love you... Zzz.

—W-what kind of dream is this fellow having? Hahaha, it sure is embarrassing to be told things like "I love you".

Gin was feeling embarrassed.

—What about me? Heyy, Sonocchi, what about me?

—Sumi, don't shake her, she's sleeping so comfortably... Wait, it's almost training time already.

—Yes, let's all train hard.

\*\*\*

The fact that Jukai had been damaged in the fight with the Vertex had become a light trauma for Sumi. Her own arrows had rebounded and pierced through many trees. And as a result? The following day, a huge landslide occurred deep in the mountain. Fortunately, there was no one at the actual spot. But if Shikoku, after changing itself to Jukai, is damaged, when it turns back into the real world, some sort of calamity will happen.

This time, the damages were light, but if the enemy's attacks were gaudy, it would cause a great disaster. Even if they could prevent it from destroying the Divine Tree, they would still fail their duty if mankind was damaged. For this reason, they wanted to repel the Vertexes that came from "the other side" at the big bridge. If they let them land in Jukai, not only would they get closer to the Divine Tree, the damage might also spread out.

Sonoko woke up, and just when they were about to head to the training ground, their homeroom teacher showed up.

—It's about time to get moving... Though, seems like you all know that. Well then, let's go to the training ground.

—Yes, Sensei. We look forward to your lesson.

The three all greeted their homeroom teacher properly.

The training ground was at Taisha's Big bridge subdivision. It was possible to walk there from school, but today Sumi wanted to study until the very last minute, so now they were travelling by car.

A short time after their actual fighting as heroes began, Taisha started to go all out at aiding the three. Taisha is the organization worshipping the Divine Tree, which blesses everything. Their voice even has more power than that of the prime minister.



—Somehow, a lot of maids came to my house, so it looks like I can leave my brother in their care now. That said though, he's a spoiled kid that would grumble if he doesn't see my face every now and then, so I still can't leave everything to them.

Or so, Gin said.

Taisha dispatched servants to their houses, and made up excuses for them when they were late to school. Their classmates were also notified from Taisha that the three were carrying out a very important duty related to the Shinju-sama. And yet everyone at Shinju-kan still treated them like always. Sumi's group was grateful for that.

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While sitting inside the car going to the training ground, the three talked about their class.

—Okamoto-san's shoes and accessories are all so cute that I'm always looking at her~

—Okamoto is so stylish that I doubt she's the same age as us.

—You think so...? I don't really understand.

—Sumi, you don't care about things like clothes at all, huh? I'm surprised that I know more about them than you.

—Cute clothes look good on you, Wasshii, you should wear them a lot more~

—Looks like you have lots of those clothes, Sonoko.

—Alright, let's hold a Dressing up Wasshii Meeting at my house next time~

—I'll abstain from such a meeting.

—But actually, Sumi-san from the Washio-san household is thinking "It's not really that bad", ihihi.

—~~!

—Uhaha, it's just a joke, Sumi. Don't hit me, don't hit me.

—Before I knew it, you girls started getting along really well.

While driving, the homeroom teacher spoke up.

—Right, we need to choose someone from you three to be the captain. Nogi-san, can you be the captain?

—Eh, y-you mean... me~?

Sonoko glanced at Sumi. Sumi was also surprised at the unexpected personnel selection. Sumi had thought that she would definitely be chosen as the captain. She had been preparing to accept it when asked. Sumi's self-esteem was stung. It was true that her arrows couldn't get through in the fight the other day. And she had also ended up crying. Nonetheless, Sumi had conceit that normally, she was the one keeping the three together.

(Why is it not me but Sonocchi... Ah!)

Sumi presumed.

The Nogi household held a tremendous power within Taisha. Compared to the Nogi, the Washio and Minowa both had lower status. The personnel selection must have taken her family into account. In the first place, Sumi herself was born into a family which is even lower than the Washio.

(Sonocchi... is also standing in a hard position.)

—Sonocchi, I agree with her choice.

Sumi looked at her with a smile.

—As long as it's not me, I'm fine with whomever.

—You two... C-can I really do it~?

—Well, now that the captain has been decided, there's another notification. To strengthen the links between you girls, this three-day weekend, you will have a training camp at an inn managed by Taisha.

—It's a great help, we could train more efficiently.

—Training camp... Uwaa, that means sleepover~ Yay!

—Looking forward to it. It's almost summer after all. Somehow, I'm getting all excited now!

The difference of enthusiasm between Sumi and the other two, to the

homeroom teacher, was hopeful in a certain way. If the girls were all too serious, they might be crushed by the weight of the duty. In that way, it must be hard for Washio, but this was still a good team.

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...And then, the heroes' training camp began. The girls performed many severe training regimes at the dojo. From the basic one of physical strength to the technique forms, everything was guided by masters in their respective professions.

The girls' free time started at night after training, from bathing time on. From here on until bed time, they could spend their time freely. But since they had to get up at 5 a.m., they couldn't stay up late.

The three restfully soaked in the hot spring.

—Balanced meals, intensive trainings, and then a good sleep. As Heroes, or should I say, this is totally the same as a training camp of athletes... Well, is there any kind of event that will grant me a super special move with a bang, Sumi?

—The basics are essential in any case, there's no way around it, Gin.

—It seems like I got some muscle~

—Oh boy, it's good to get stronger but for a growing girl, this menu is too severe in many ways. I'm saad.

—Gin, you're complaining too much.

—Well, it's easy for Sumi-san from the Washio-san household to say that since she's already grown up in so many places.

—Grown up...?

—Those breasts, aren't they the biggest in our class?

—Gin!!!!

Sumi was going to grab Gin. Gin caught Sumi's hands and fought back.



—I only said the truth! Rather, having a big chest and yet getting all shy about it, you sure are living in luxury!

—Why are you the one getting angry...

—You!

Gin splashed hot water at Sumi.

—S-such bad manners...

—Who cares about manners! Take this!

Sumi endured Gin's hot water splashing attacks.

—Just a kid playing around... you can endure it, Sumi.

—Ahh, since I'm a kid, I'll keep going. Here, here.

—...! You! I can't take it anymore.

—You sure boil up fast, Sumi.

—Shut up, ei!

Sumi splashed the hot water back at Gin.

—Buwaa, hehe, your manners are bad.

—Mou~ You're supposed to rest in a hot spring~

Sonoko's skin was becoming glossy.

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The night was growing late. Even when it was bed time already, Gin didn't sleep right away.

—You guys, do you think you can easily go to sleep like that?

—I can sleep immediately at any time~

—We have to wake up early tomorrow, Gin, close your eyes.

—No way.

Gin nonchalantly rejected the honor student's opinion.

Sumi stood up and was about to educate Gin but...

—Let's discuss the people we like!

Her fighting spirit disappeared at Gin's unexpected words.

—Gin, by the people we like...

—O-f c-o-u-r-s-e. Whoever tries to gloss it over by talking about her dad or relatives will have her Hero title revoked!

—Y-you said that but what about you, Gin?

Sumi was surprised at herself for getting really into this topic.

—Pitter-patter~

Sonoko's eyes were glittering with expectation.

—None!



Gin declared with a self-satisfied look.

—That's so unfair~

Sonoko protested while Sumi felt relief.

Because there was another person besides herself who had no one.

—I also have no one so it's a draw. What about you, Sonocchi?

Sumi nonchalantly passed her turn.

—Fu, fu, fu. I have~

Answering with an indifferent look, she made it so Sumi and Gin both had to lean in closer.

—Ohh! Love story incoming?

Gin's tension rose up.

—Wh... Who? Someone from our class?

For some reason, Sumi became nervous.

—Yeah, Wasshii and Mino-san.

In contrast to Sonoko, who answered cheerfully, Gin and Sumi's tension fell down.

—... I expected as much.

—But 3 girls together like this is also nice. Like, it's hotter this way...

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At that time, the three sensed that time had halted.

—A hot battle huh...? Hah... Why don't those Vertexes give me a break in this situation?

—Stop grumbling. Captain, your orders.

—Eh, let me see, sortie~



After flying out from the inn and arriving at the big bridge, like always, Sumi's group waited for the enemies' invasion at the center of the bridge. The only big bridge connecting Shikoku to the other side. Because of that, the bridge wasn't forestized completely. The Vertexes would come through here. Before long, a grotesque thing showed up.

—It's here! Ooh, this time, it's one with a Visual Kei look.

—I-it seems so edgy and strong~

—Let me try shooting it.

Gathering her fighting spirit, Sumi drew her bow to its limit. At the same time, with a thud, the Vertex dropped its huge body onto the bridge. Its four fang-looking parts sunk into the bridge heavily.

—This time for sure...!!

Sumi fired her arrows. Spiraling like a tornado, the arrows flew towards the target. Little by little, the Vertex began to vibrate. And at the same time, the bridge, Jukai, the world shook violently.

—An earthquake, is that one making it!?

*gin* a thick sound. Sumi's arrows were flicked away by the vibration.

—Ugh, are they not getting through again...?

—It's not the time to feel depressed, Wasshii! We have to stop this earthquake! Get close to the enemy~!

—Ye-yes.

Instantly switching her mood around, Sumi headed for the enemy.

At that time, the Vertex extracted its fangs from the bridge, and started surging up the sky.

—What the? The earthquake's stopped but... is it planning to run away just like that!? Come down here, heyyy!

Receiving the moonlight, the enemy's body dimly shined.

—! Mino-san, the enemy's trying to do something! Defend yourself with your axes, defense~!!

—Eh... nwha!

From the sky, the Vertex sent down a rain. Or more accurately, a rain of bullets made of light. Those light bullets were sent out like a downpour.

—If I dodge then both the bridge and Jukai will be doomed! And also, I like baseball quite a bit!!

Like dancing, Gin used her two axes to repel the light bullets back into the sky. As long as she sent them flying back to the sky, Jukai would not be damaged.

—We have to at least knock the enemy down...!

Sumi kneeled down, and set her arrows towards the sky. At the same time, the space started shaking. And an unbelievable sight leaped into her aiming eye. The Vertex, without a moment of delay, had switched to another attack.

—Gin, a big one is coming!

Right as Sumi screamed, a mysterious light that looked like a laser was vertically fired directly below the enemy. Aiming exactly at Gin's location. Gin joined her two axes together to make a shield, and stopped the beam.

—Ugh, grrr...! Th-this is hard!

Gin, who had become an open target, was somehow able to continue blocking the light.

—Mino-san, how long can you keep blocking that beam~?

—A-about 10 seconds...!? I-if I put out my spirit then, ab... about two, I've, se, cond...

Gin already sounded like she was at her limit.

Severe thoughts unfolded at high speed in Sumi's mind.

(What should I do!? Save Gin, then take distance and get into stance again? ...

Or should I attack it right now? But then Gin will...) —Well then, I and Wasshii will strike the enemy from the sky~! Let's go, Wasshii!!

Right as she said that, Sonoko left the exposed Gin behind and jumped towards the enemy in the sky. Instantly, Sumi jumped after Sonoko. Several seconds had already passed even during this period. Gin was coming near her limit. While tearing the air surging up, Sumi prepared her bow to bring down the target.

There was no more time. At this rate, Gin would be burnt to ashes.

—Wasshii! Don't aim at its body~

She heard Sonoko's voice. What Sonoko was pointing at was not the enemy's body...

—I see... Your thoughts are really radical!

Sumi released the arrow charged with all of her power. The target was the place emitting the light beam, the muzzle. Like a cannon, Sumi's arrow slantingly slipped into the firing muzzle. With a big explosion, the Vertex burst open.

—I did it...

—Leave the rest to me~...!!

Sonoko vigorously assaulted the weakened Vertex. Like ripping up the air, she mercilessly unleashed a storm of spear attacks on the grotesque body's crumbling insides. Disregarding appearance, a desperate offense.

—Get out, get away from everyone's place~!!



The thunderous roar of her launching attacks reverberated high into the sky. Because of the damage it suffered, the Vertex crackled and spat sparks. Unsteadily, it started to fall down from the sky.

To support Sonoko, Sumi lost herself in launching arrows.

1 shot, 2 shots, 3 shots, 4 shots, 5 shots...!

Not giving a gap for it to regenerate fully, the pair's attacks rained down incessantly. Before they realized it, they had already pushed the Vertex back close to the wall. Nevertheless, in order to recover its body and to escape, the Vertex went out to the space beyond the wall.

—... Is it gone~?

—Seems like it...

—I-it won't come back, right~?

—Just to be sure, let's try waiting for 5 minutes.

To make sure, Sonoko and Sumi glared at the empty space in front of the wall.

—If it comes back... I'll pierce it!

As if being pushed back by that vigor, the enemy did not come back...

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After reverting back from Jukaika, before they knew it, Sumi's group was in the park the bridge could be seen from. The small shrine installed in the park was giving off a faint light. The Divine Tree had transferred Sumi's group there after the battle.

While Shikoku is transformed into Jukai, the real world's time isn't running. In other words, it was still late at night. While waiting to be picked up after contacting Taisha, the three collapsed onto the lawn. They were always worn out after battle.

—Mino-san, are you okay?

—Well, that fight broke my hip... All I did was defend against a beam from the sky, so uninteresting... sob sob.

—But you played a big part the other day~ Besides, it was thanks to you stopping that attack that I could strike it.

—Sonocchi... you sure could make decisions in such a short time, “strike it” you said.

—I mean, Gin-chan said that she could hold on for 10 seconds, so don’t we have 10 seconds then? I thought we could somehow do it if we had that much time~ Since the enemy had firepower, it was dangerous to prolong the battle.

—...!

She put her complete faith in Gin. She understood the enemy’s characteristics, and made decisive attacks. When Sonoko had already decided, Sumi was still lost.

(I see... Seems like Sensei saw through that.)

While usually Sonoko is unreliable, at the critical moment, her decisiveness, judgment, and insight are the best out of the three. Compared to her, when it counts, Sumi still hesitates. Sumi finally understood that it wasn’t because of her family that Sonoko was chosen to be captain, it was thanks to her own accomplishments.

Sumi felt a bit sick about herself for ignoring her own weakness, and blaming her parentage for not being selected as captain.

—Sonocchi... you are amazing.

Sumi felt deeply, deeply ashamed of herself.

—You sure are the captain, really.

—Right, she really comes around when it counts!

—Aha, ahahaha~

Sonoko was being shy.

(I will just have to always support her properly... With Sonoko’s ability, if I do that, soon, one day, she will become a splendid captain...) Sumi recognized her own role.

(I will support this captain splendidly.)

And so, she started to get fired up for her new mission.

—Sumi is looking at you with a burning stare, Sonoko.

—S-somehow, it looks like I'll be assailed if I avert my eyes. Al~right, I'll stare back at you~!

The two stared at each other enthusiastically. Sumi heartily grasped Sonoko's hands.

—Hau~?

—Looks like something has been settled inside Sumi.

—Sonocchi... Sonoko, I will raise you.

—R-raise me~?

—Ahaha, what the heck! Mother!?

Gin rolled about with laughter.

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*The intelligent life-forms which they'd continuously intercepted... What kind of action were they going to take...?*

*At this point in time, the girls still didn't know.*

*(Chapter 3: End)*

# Chapter 4: Battle





第4話 「たたかい」

作 タカヒロ  
イラスト BUNBUN

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鷺尾須美は  
勇者である

**CENSORED**

■■■■ years ago, according to documents of the ■■■■ era, friends that you want to stay with forever are called BFF. [\[5\]](#)

*It's an interesting word somehow, and I liked it. Us three are BFF.*

*Even now, I feel them close to me.*

*Hero's memoir 298.7.10*

---

Nogi household, Sonoko's room.

—I... I really don't think this suits me.

—That's not true, right Wasshi~?

—Yes, It suits you very well, Gin. (snap)

—H-Hey! Stop it, Sumi. Don't take pictures.

—Aah. Me too, me too! a photo session.

Sonoko quickly took out her terminal.

—Daa~. That's it, this ends now.

—Ah~, don't take them off, I still haven't taken any.

—I'll send you the pictures later, Sonocchi.

—Ku~h. I thought I would be able to dress up Sumi as I pleased. How did it turn out like this?

Sumi and Gin were hanging out at Sonoko's house. And the moment Gin proposed Sumi should try out some of Sonoko's frilly clothes...

—But... Don't you think this would suit Gin as well?

Sumi countered with her own idea.

—WHATTO? What nonsense are you...

—I do! Mino-san would look so cute in these.

—No, no, no, no. I've never even worn something like this. Plus, I'm being sold as the sporty type.

—Well then, this is your chance to take up the cute-type challenge.

—I want to see an even cuter side of you, Mino-san.

—Tch, Sumi was supposed to be the one wearing them, how did it turn out like this? No, there is still a way!

Rock, paper, scissors. The loser has to wear them.

—Very well, I will be going with rock first, then.

—Mind games?!!

And thus, Gin's pace was broken and as a result lost. She was forced to wear frilly clothes as a penalty.

—Shall we try another one, Sonocchi?

—Okay, there's still a lot more~

—No, no, no, my time as a dress-up doll is over.

—Eeeh... But you looked so cute.

—Yeah, you looked really cute.

—S-stop calling me cute.

Gin's face turned bright red. She took refuge, and rolled down on the bed. Sumi and Sonoko went in for the final blow.

—C U T E !!

The servants at the Nogi house pleasantly listened to the laughing voices coming out of Sonoko's Room.

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Shinju-kan.

The day was over. The students were all nervously getting ready to leave. Their childish side itching to go out and play and the feeling of responsibility fueled by Shinju-kan's high moral code telling them they have to listen to their teachers were clashing. At Sumi's class, their homeroom teacher was talking

about the school trip. The fresh sea breeze blowing from far away was counteracting July's heat. Sumi had her head held high as she listened. She sometimes gave warning gazes to Sonoko, who was spacing out on the seat next to hers.

Sumi was determined to raise Sonoko to be a splendid leader. She would move in and warn her in person if she weren't out of her reach.

(I wonder if Gin's listening to the teacher...)

Sumi quickly looked at Gin's direction. She was sitting properly, eyes wide open. The focus of her eyes, however, wasn't stable. She's probably in full image training mode. She still looks like she's listening, so I'll simply give her a slight warning later, Sumi thought to herself.

A little while back, this would have been a full lecture, instead of a warning. Sumi felt herself getting softer.

(Still, I wonder if it's gonna be okay... us going on the trip.) After all, even if for just a little while, they were still leaving the city. Wouldn't this get in the way of their duty?

After school and training were over, Sumi professed these concerns to her friends.

—Ahaa, you're overthinking it, Sumi.

After a shower to wash off the sweat, Gin laughed at Sumi's concerns while getting dressed.

—But when I think about what would happen if a Vertex were to show up while we're in the middle of the trip...

—We're heroes, so even if we're a bit far we can get back to the bridge in no time~

—It does piss me off that we don't ever know when Vertexes might show up, but if you think too much you won't be able to get anything done. For example, if you start thinking they might come right this moment when we're exhausted from training, you won't be able to concentrate on training anymore. Even

sleeping at night would become difficult, am I wrong, Washio-chan from the Washio-kun household?

Sumi nods approvingly.

—... Yes, I understand, Gin.

—Then relax and let's enjoy the school trip, Wasshi~

—Yes, relax. Ahaha.

—Your mental strength is blinding, you two...

—With that being said, us three will be on the same group, right?

—Are you sure you don't wanna be on Matsui-san's group, Mino-san?

They're girls Gin sometimes plays soccer with during break time.

—Yep, I've already talked to Matsun about it. I wanna be in this group.

—Mino-san...

Sonoko, who found herself alone a lot, was absolutely overjoyed by Gin's statement.

—I just washed off the sweat, don't cling to me like that...

\*\*\*

A few days later, during lunch break. After eating at the school cafeteria, Sumi invited the other two to her desk.

—I would like you two to have these.

Sumi took out a chunky pile of printouts with a thud, and handed them to the other two. The cover read "School trip guidebook".

—... Sumi-san, whatever might this be?

—It is as you can see, Gin, the guidebook for our group. I just sent a digital version over to your terminals.

—Oho. You went through all the trouble of making this by yourself, Sumi.

—When I realized it was okay for us to enjoy the trip, I somehow stayed up all night making it, and as result I ended up with a lot more content that I had

originally in mind.

Sumi gestures as if wiping off the sweat.

—I'm starting to think Wasshi~ is not just too strict, but obsessed~

—Whoever ends up marrying Sumi will be extremely fortunate, but I also feel sorry for him.





—How did it come to this?

—If only there was a man just like myself, Minowa Gin.

—Sounds petty.

—Sumi is pretty stiff, so she would need someone to forcibly lead her around.

—Could you not talk about me as if I were a mushroom?

—A boy like me would... not be able to handle Wasshi~... Sorry~

—At any rate, if we follow this guide properly, we'll be fully prepared for the trip. All that's left is to pray to the Shinju-sama that it won't rain.

—Ah. In that case I'll make three Teruteru Bouzu~ I'll model them after us~

—But we'll be hanging them... Doesn't that sound too surreal?

The three kept thinking about the trip as they chatted.

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Shinju-kan's trip will be at the prefectural capital, a bit far from the girls' town. It is known for having some of the country's highest grade gardens and athletic facilities. A lot of students have been there already, as it is the biggest touristic region; despite that everyone was excited. Sumi's group was no exception.

As per Gin's request, the Hero party went to the athletic course first.

—Since we're heroes, we should at least be able to clear all the attractions at the playground.

Gin's mysterious reasoning process aside, this is a good chance to get some exercise since we can't train here, thought Sumi.

—Ehehe. The old me might have been left behind, but I'm different now. This is new bitter me, not old sweet me~.

—Well said, Sonoko. You are so manly.

—I'm going on ahead, Gin.

—Ah, you're leaving without a retort? Wait up, Sumi.



The three lightly ran from course to course in their current clothes. Thanks to all the battles and their training, the girls' bodies were unbelievably fit. They even cleared all the courses designed for middle-schoolers. Spectators were dazzled by their swift movements.

—Awawa, I'm... I'm swaying~ I'm swaying~!

Sonoko alone was struggling from time to time.

—You guys are too fast~ wait for me~!

—What's wrong, Sonoko? Where did your enthusiasm go?

—Uu~ Now that I think about it, even if we're always fighting together Wasshi~ and Mino-san are constantly ahead of me~

—Stop complaining. Come on, only a little more to go.

Sonoko let out an "Eeei" as she passed the finishing line; Gin then went and hugged her.

—Good girl, good girl. You did your best.

Gin patted her head gently.

—Uu~ Next time I'll run side by side with you~

Witnessing that sight, Sumi shoved herself in between the two.

—What are you doing, Sumi?

—I wanted in too.

—What are you, a dog?

—I bet Wasshi~ wants Mino-san to pat her head as well. You're so good at it.

—You're such a spoiled brat. Come here you.

—...

Sumi said nothing, as she closed her eyes.

Next, they headed to the hall of encouragement of commerce and industry, as per Sonoko's request. In here, you could try producing all kinds of crafts by yourself. Sonoko and Gin now had their positions completely reversed.

—Ununu. I'm disappointed in my lack of dexterity.

—That's not true. Yours looks fabulous too, Mino-san~

—Sonocchi, your work is just... too good, I can't stop sighing.

—Eeh~ I'm just making it the way I imagined it~

—The staff members were all so surprised; they kept staring at your hands as they worked.

—Give me some of your creative imagination, Sonocchi.

—Sumi's work looks exactly like the sample, after all. Even I went and made some arrangements.

—That's because you couldn't make it according to the sample, and went and made all those modifications.

—It's that obvious, huh? Ahaha!

Sumi lets out a lively laugh. Still, she thought better of Gin's wild design than her own, which looked exactly like the model. In the end, Sonoko's work was so complete that she was asked by the staff if they could display it.

Lastly, the three visited the Japanese gardens, as Sumi requested.

—What a splendid sight... It completely lifts the exhaustion from earlier.

Sumi closed her eyes, as she admired the traditional beauty laying before her.

—It sure is a neat sight, but for this to be the one thing you were looking forward to the most... As expected of Sumi.

—Wasshi~ became a lot softer, but this is the kind of thing she will never let go~

—Well then, I shall explain to you two just how wonderful a place this is.

Sumi smiled as she grabbed both of their hands firmly.

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The children, who had been frolicking all day, had fallen asleep on the bus back home. The trained heroes were no exception. The bus eventually safely arrived to Shinju-kan.



The three were on their way back home as the sun was setting.

—Ah~ That was so fun~

Sonoko was in high-spirits, which was unusual.

—We had plenty of sleep on the bus, so we're fully charged.

—Tomorrow's our day off~ We'll be spending half of it training, what about the other half?

—Hmm...

Sumi was thinking how they should spend the rest of their day. With these two, anything they did would be fun.

—Alright, I invite you two to my super special Ines full course tour.

At that moment, the three felt a familiar feeling of uneasiness. Time had stopped: the world had forestized.

—The Vertexes are not invited, though.

—Aww~ It was such a fun day~. At the very end this thing comes and ruins everything.

—At least it came after the trip ended.

—It hasn't ended yet, not until we're home, Gin.

—What are you, a teacher?

—Let's go~!

It was pretty enthusiastic for Sonoko.

At the leader's command, the three took their terminals into their hands, and transformed into their hero forms.

Sumi and the other two stood on the bridge, awaiting the arrival of the enemy. As always, the world was forestized.

—You really do get used to this view.

Gin nonchalantly commented on the sight from the big bridge, as she did some warm-up exercises.

—Don't let your guard down, Gin. That's...

—The most dangerous of times, right? I know, Sumi.

—Lately, it seems as if Mino-san has been purposefully saying things that would make Wasshi~ warn her about them~

—Ahaha, it kinda became a habit.

—I would rather you didn't.

Is what she said, but she didn't really mean it. An innocent conversation that helps them all relax. Sumi has grown able to tolerate such a thing.

At that moment, the enemy appeared.

—! It's here~. Eh? EEEEEEH?

The reason for Sonoko's surprise quickly became apparent. On the other side, "two" enemies were approaching. Giants with a bizarre shape were standing side by side. Advancing slowly, they looked intimidating.

—Aww man, two of them at the same time... Now that you mention it, they didn't need to be fair and come at us one at a time.

—We've been told Vertexes moved independently though...

The fourth battle. The experienced Sumi was calm. An unexpected occurrence, but if they joined their powers they could overcome it.

—That surprised me, but it's fine~. Mino-san and I will take one each, Wasshi~ will support us with her arrows.

Sonoko had already put into words the strategy Sumi was thinking about. What a reliable leader.

—As expected of Sonocchi. Understood.

—Well then, I'll take the disgusting one.

—Both of them are pretty disgusting though~

Gin charged at the enemy, and Sonoko immediately followed.

Sumi aimed her bow.

(I'll focus on whoever's having a hard time... but for now, I'll be covering both of them...!) Gin's enemy had a large pair of scissors for a tail. It swung them down with an immense force, but Gin wasn't overwhelmed.

—This one's pretty simple. It fits me!

Gin violently swung her two axes, emitting endless sparks as they came in contact with the Vertex. Relying on Sumi's well-timed arrows, she focused on attacking the enemy, pushing it back.

Sonoko's foe had a long tail, with a sharp pointy needle at its end. It freely manipulated it to strike with thrusting attacks over and over. Sonoko calmly observed its movements, and made it her priority to dodge the pointy tip.

—You really look like you want that to hit~. Well then, I'll just make sure that needle doesn't touch me~

Sonoko's spear had a tip with a special shape in the form of multiple blades. It was wider than a normal spear. She could easily use it to block the enemy's tricky attacks. Sonoko used the chance created by Sumi's arrows to attack, driving the Vertex back.

(They're both so vivid...! At this rate we'll win easily! Even against two enemies!!) Sumi continued firing, as she was convinced of their victory.

At that moment. It came down raining from the sky.

—?! Something's coming from above!!

The moment Sumi shouted that, thousands of arrows of light came down raining. Aimed at Sumi and the others, they all came down at once.

—The target area is too large! We can't dodge it~!

Sonoko immediately spun her spear above her head, acting as an umbrella. Sumi rushed to Sonoko's side instantly. That was their emergency plan. Gin joined her axes and used them to block the rain of arrows. However, as they attacked the girls, the arrows hitting the other two Vertexes also seemed to be healing them, regenerating at high speed. They relentlessly attacked the heros.

With nowhere to run, they couldn't deal with all the attacks at the same time.

—Uaaaaaaaaah!!

It was unclear whose scream that was. The three girls were sent flying, after taking the Vertex' blow. Their bodies fell scattered on the bridge.

—Ah...ha....aa....I-It hurts...

Her entire body was in pain. Sumi couldn't help but groan. She couldn't even tell where she was hit.

—Cough... cough.....Cough.

Sonoko's pained coughs could be heard.

—C...Can you stand... Sumi, Sonoko...?

Gin was struggling to get up on her feet. Sumi forced herself to stand up. As she did, the feeling of pain coursing through her body multiplied. She coughed up blood when she tried to answer. Sonoko was in the same state.

As she was looking over to the wounded Sumi, she saw a third Vertex joining the other two. There was another one. It was all three of them from the start. It was the source of the previous attack. Making great use of its regenerative powers, it attacked in a coordinated manner. Vertexes might possess a higher degree of intellect than expected. The other two were still being repaired by its arrows.

Sumi braced herself. It would only take a few more seconds for them to be completely healed. They would then resume advancing immediately. If that were to happen, the girls laying in their path would definitely die. Being heroes, Sumi and others had their regenerative powers enhanced as well. However, compared to how the Vertexes were being healed instantly; theirs were too slow.

—I'm the only one who can still move, huh...That only leaves us one choice.

Gin, being the closest-ranged fighter of the three, had a higher defense than the others. Thanks to that, she could still move unlike the other two. She carried both of them.

—Here we go...You're heavier than Sonoko, Sumi.

—What are you....saying Gin...This isn't the time for...

—Mino-san, what are you trying to...

—If us heroes ran away, the world would end. We gotta do our best.

Gin held their hands firmly.

—...Gin?

Then, from the top of the bridge.

—Leave this to me. You two rest for a bit.

She threw them into the ocean.

—Wha...?!!

—Mino-san...!!

—See ya.

Just as if they were parting at the end of the school day.

Gin bid farewell to the two.





—GIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIN!!!

The two yelled as they fell down. Eventually, they disappeared into the darkness.

—Now then...

Still feeling the warmth of the hands she was holding. She picked up her axes. The Vertexes had already finished regenerating, and were advancing. The girl confronted the three monsters.

—I told them to leave this to me, so if I don't take responsibility I would look really uncool...

—Let's do this!!!!

Gin charged at the Scissors Vertex with an immense speed. She had already grasped its weakness from the earlier exchange. The scissors part was pretty solid, but its torso apparently wasn't. She violently slashed at the part Sumi's arrows seemed to be most effective on. The Vertex in the middle started shooting arrows. Gin used the Scissors Vertex as a shield against them. The long-tailed one attacked her from a blind spot. Gin joined her axes and blocked the needle, then charged and started attacking it. The other Vertex was still shooting its arrows.

If she were to pause here, she would be overwhelmed by the three monsters. Gin braced herself, as she limited her dodging to simply twisting her body around so as not to get hit in her vitals. Arrows pierced her all over. Still, she didn't stop her assault. She stayed close to the long-tailed Vertex as she mercilessly attacked with her axes. She completely ignored all attacks that wouldn't cause fatal wounds. By abandoning defense, she was able to deal great amounts of damage with her blows.

—You monsters wouldn't understand this kind of strength!

She kept pushing the three monsters back, while taking their attacks all by herself.

—This here is the will of humans!!

Thus, she howled. As she swung her two axes. She attacked the three

monsters one after another, as if she were dancing. The monsters were faltering in response to Gin's erratic onslaught. Little by little, they were heading back.

—GET... THE HELL OUUUUUUUUT!!

Gin's family's faces flashed through her mind. Her baby brother. He should be sound asleep around this time. She was planning on raising him with love, to be her loyal underling. She wondered if he'd think his sister was super cool, if he ever heard about her accomplishment.

The arrows of light were stuck to Gin's feet, as if stopping her movements. She almost lost her balance, and collapsed. But she stood firm. This is no time to be collapsing. She clenched her teeth and continued attacking. Her body should have reached its limit long ago, and yet it was strangely still able to move. Her vision blurred.

But she couldn't stop her assault.

Sumi, Sonoko, her family, baby brother, school, friends. She was going to protect them all. Swinging her axes as she was absorbed in her own thoughts. Gin's yells echoed through the big bridge.

Eventually, her consciousness faded into a white light.

\*\*\*

Sumi and Sonoko climbed back up the bridge. They had healed enough to be able to move again. Uneasiness was coursing through Sumi's whole body.

It was too quiet.

They climbed up to the top, but there was no one there. There was just a blood trail and traces of destruction leading up to the wall. They were proof Gin drove the enemy back.

—GIN....

—Let's go!

They dragged their bodies still in pain as they ran ahead.

(Gin... We'll be there in a moment... I can at least provide cover fire.) (Coming

up with your own battle tactic without the leader's approval, prepare yourself for a lecture when we get back.) The two soon arrived to the wall. The enemy was nowhere to be seen.

Standing there, in front of the giant wall, was Minowa Gin alone. Still holding her axe in her hand.



—GIN!!!

Sumi and Sonoko felt relieved. They approached their friend with their hands on their chests.

—Mino-san... You drove them away. Amazing, that's so amazing~

—The world will be back to normal soon. Let's head straight to the hospital when we go back...!

The two called over.

But Gin didn't answer.

—... Mino-san...?

—Gin? What's wrong?

No response still.

—Gin...? GIN?!

---

*Staring intensely at the wall, as if to make sure no enemy would attempt to come back.*

*Her crimson outfit, now painted bright red with her own blood.*

*The girl stood still.*

*(Chapter 4: End)*

# Chapter 5: Goodbye





It was the first day of summer.

—Here we go, hold tight Sonoko.

—Wa~, so fa~st!

Sonoko was ecstatic, as Gin pulled her swim ring around. The three heroes are currently playing at a pool owned by Taisha (reserved for them). It was per Gin's suggestion, since they, as heroes, needed to improve their basic physical skills.

—He~y Sumi. How long are you gonna be doing those warm-up exercises for?

Gin called to Sumi, hopping up by the poolside.

—You guys went in too fast. Gin, you didn't even do your warm-ups, unbelievable.

Sumi said as she stretched.

—Water accidents are really scary. I'd rather be safe than sorry.

—Fufu~...Take a look, Sonoko. Sumi really does... have a body unfit for an elementary schooler, don't you think?

—I'm so jealous~. It's like a fruit shop~

—Wait, what are two looking at!

—Gimme those peaches, pops.

—Shut up, Gin.

Sumi entered the water blushing.

—... so cold, it feels nice...

—Hey, this just came to me. But what if enemies show up now? Will we sortie in swimsuits?

—Ah~ that'll probably happen~

—It'd look pretty miserable if we were to lose...We gotta be careful.

—Speaking of water, Gin. You just went and drank that Vertex's water. Did nothing really happen afterwards?

—Ah... Thinking about it, I might get addicted to that taste. I kinda wanna

drink it again, fufufu.

—I wonder if it had any addictive substances... Still, you're looking pretty well. I'm glad.

—Super well. That's my redeeming feature!

Gin said as she made a fist.

—Although, I'd really appreciate it if you'd spare me from the long study sessions!

—Long or short, you can't concentrate at all, Gin.

—Fua~ah...I'm feeling sleepy.

Sonoko yawned as she made herself comfortable inside her swim ring, and floated down the pool.

—Ah, I thought she reminded me of something. Jellyfish!

—Sonocchi was probably a jellyfish in her previous life.

—But jellyfish are poisonous. It really hurts. I've been stung by one before.

—That must have been terrible, Sonocchi.

—Did it just attack you while you were swimming?

—No, it was washed up ashore.

—What?

—I was taking a walk, when I saw it on the shore. I went and touched it thinking it might be squishy, that's when it got me~

—I... I see. It must have been rough, Sonoko.

—... Don't go touching Vertex out of curiosity, too.

—Alright Sumi!! Wanna race?

—Abrupt, aren't we? Very well, Gin; this is what those warm-ups were for.

—Oo~ The usual showdown~

—What's your preferred swimming style? Let's decide on one to go with. Mine's butterfly.

—I prefer the traditional stroke style.

—Tra...What now?

—The traditional stroke. I can also do the breaststroke and the backstroke.

—What about the crawl? It's pretty fast.

—I do not like it very much.

—What about the butterfly? It's more active than the breaststroke.

—I do not like it very much.

—What about the dog paddle.

—Ah, I actually like that one.

—Sometimes, I have no clue what to expect from you.

—I'm also good at the dog paddle~ Wanna see~?

—I could imagine Sonoko swimming that way.

—Yes, faintly.

—Here I go~ Eee~i

Splash, splash, splash, splash, splash, splash!!!!

—Too fast!!

—I knew it. Sonocchi is not to be underestimated.

—I'm exhausted. Let's just swim normally, Gin.

—Aight.

\*\*\*

After they left, the three went to an Udon shop. Their hometown had a large number of Udon shops. A lot of them welcomed elementary schoolers. They had prices as low as 200 Yen, so they were light on the wallet as well.

—I'll go with Soy Sauce Udon~

—Pickled plums here.

—Kitsune Udon for me.

Each one had their preferences. They placed their order as usual.

—Now then, let's do the "We're expecting good Udon" aura ritual while waiting.

—Yes, it is a tradition for when you're waiting for your Udon.

—Yep, yep~

The three of them joined their arms, closed their eyes and emitted their aura in silence while waiting for the order to arrive.

Gin thoroughly savors her Udon as she eats.

—Mmm~, so goood...

The other two nod in approval.

—I bet if the Vertex tasted Udon, they would give up on trying to destroy mankind~

—I hear they actually tried the Udon strategy once.

—Eeh? Really~?

—One of the Taisha people was half-jokingly talking about it, so I don't think it was serious. But since normal weapons don't work on Vertex, they had to try all kinds of stuff.

—... So that's when they tried Udon~

—Looking at our current situation though, it must not have worked...

—Yeah, it seems they threw Udon balls at Vertex, but it didn't even faze them. We don't even know if those things eat in the first place.

—U-unfazed by Udon~

—The more we learn about them, the harder it becomes to understand them. I mean, it's Udon!! How can you not react at all?

Sumi and the others were very serious about this matter. That's how important Udon was to them.

—Speaking of which, do you two have any dreams for the future?

—That came out of nowhere again, Gin. At this point it's become an everyday thing, though.

—It's just that I never asked you two about this. We can do our duty as heroes because we're still little girls. But that also means we won't be able to do it forever.

—Well, I suppose we'll just be recruited into Taisha, considering the families we were born into.

—I wonder if we'll still be able to work other jobs while being in Taisha though~

—Yes, I have heard of such cases.

—I'll change the question then. What would you like to do, aside from Taisha?

—I'd like to be a scholar. And specialize in ancient civilizations' history.

—Ooh. As expected of Sumi-san. A very serious answer.

—You're gonna study about the Christian Era~?

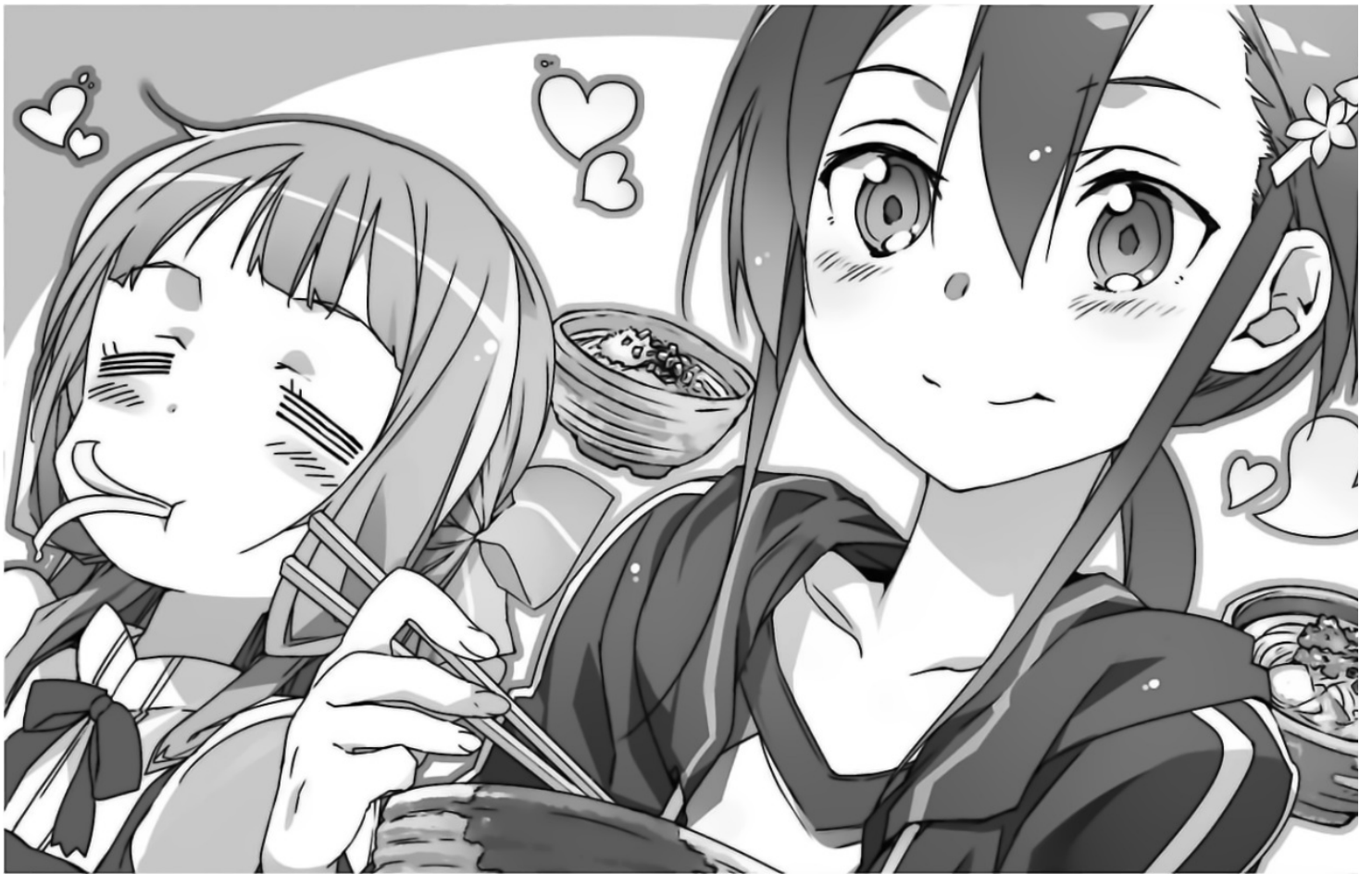
—Yes, that's what I'm interested in. What about you, Gin?

—Well you see, I don't really have any life goals. I guess I do like sports, but not enough to want to go pro. I wanna raise my little brother to be my underling, but that can't exactly be called a dream. Which is why I asked the two of you.

—Don't you have any wishes? At all?

—... nope, not really...

—Why did you blush just now?



—Ah, well; I suppose I did consider having a family of my own to be cool. But that would imply my goal in life would be to become a bride. And that's kinda embarrassing.

—It's not embarrassing at all~

—Fufu, it's wonderful, Gin.

—N-no... It's pretty embarrassing. H-hey Sumi, don't cling to me!!

—I'm thinking of writing short novels while working at Taisha~

—Sonoko's... novels?

—I'd expect some amazing development naturally happening within 10 lines of the start.

—An airhead like Sonoko might actually hit the jackpot and come up with something great.

—She's a natural after all.

—I'd love to model some characters in my novel after you two. The kind and dependable Mino-san, and the serious but sometimes interesting Wasshi~

—Serious but... sometimes interesting...

—Better than boring.

—True, but... I'd like to be depended on as well.

—Having two dependable characters would ruin the balance of the story, wouldn't it?

—That might be the case, but...

—I love seeing you blush and get all flustered like that, Sumi.

—Me too~

—Uu...

Lately, it seems that Sumi has been put in such situations a lot. She might complain, but she didn't hate them. As long as the three of them were together, anything they did was fun. The heroes spent their time talking about all kinds of stuff. Since each of them was so unique, they enjoyed listening to the others'

opinions.

By the time they realized it, it was already sunset.

—Time sure flies when we're chatting like this.

—I know, I wanna talk some more~

—There's still tomorrow.

—You're right. Today was fun. See ya.

Gin turned around and left. Looking at her back as she walked away, Sumi couldn't help but feel discomfort in her heart.

Tomorrow...?

Tomorrow, will I be able to see Gin?

—Ah... Wait, Gin. Gin!!

Gin wouldn't turn around, no matter how much Sumi called to her.

\*\*\*

—Ha...

Sumi opened her eyes. It was the middle of the night at Taisha headquarters. Sumi was brought back to reality when she saw the coffin in front of her.

That was all just a dream. Joyful memories with her friends.

The coffin she was looking at was not a dream. Inside it, Gin was sleeping peacefully. An eternal slumber. She exhausted her life as she fought back the three Vertexes all by herself, allowing Sumi and Sonoko to escape.

—Gin...

Sumi firmly held her hand. The hand that was so warm in her dream, was now cold. Just a few hours ago, they were playing, laughing, squabbling and fighting together. Warm tears gathered up in her eyes. Next to her, Sonoko had already cried herself to sleep.

The moment of farewell came the following day.



第5話 「さようなら」



***CENSORED***

*The Shinju-sama is God itself. Therefore, I prayed.*

*That I didn't want to be separated from my friends.*

*That was, in a way, something that would continue to be granted to me.*

*In exchange for the sacrifice of a comrade, we gained ■■■■ ■■■■.*

*Hero's memoir 298.7.12*

---

Minowa Gin had lost her life in duty. It was announced at Shinju-Kan. The duties performed for the Shinju-sama come in all forms; some of them were exceptionally severe. The students at Shinju-kan were taught such. Still, the death of a peer was a first. Almost all of Gin's classmates were in tears. It seems like a lot of the male students had feelings for the cheerful young girl.

Sumi and Sonoko were dumbfounded. All kinds of feelings were clashing inside them.

One thing, they had both decided on: if the enemy were to come, they would fight. No matter how sad they were, if they ran from battle then Gin's sacrifice would lose all meaning. However, they still couldn't perform basic daily tasks the way they usually do.

Gin's funeral was being held in the midst of the rain. Sumi's chest tightened every time she looked at the smiling portrait of her friend. The Minowa family's sobs could be heard. Gin's baby brother was sleeping soundly.

And at last, the moment of final goodbyes had come.

The girls felt a familiar uneasiness.

—...!!

—...Wha~

Time froze. And forestization began. The Vertexes had come to attack.

That moment of grief, of farewells.

The enemy trampled it as well.

—AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAHHH!!!!

Sumi let out a scream, as her feelings burst out of her chest. Sonoko wasn't surprised, she was feeling the same.

The next words that came out of Sumi's mouth were simple and clear.

—Unforgivable.

Reflecting her feelings. She had nothing clever to say at that moment.

—Wasshi~... Let's go!

—Yeah...

They no longer had a vanguard to rely on. The two of them had to protect the world alone. Anxiety wasn't what they felt though. Another emotion, much, much stronger dwelled inside them.

—We will...!!

—Drive it away!

Anger.

Sumi and Sonoko transformed without hesitation.

—We'll be right back, Mino-san!

—Gin...

They addressed their friend in the coffin. And headed towards the bridge.

\*\*\*

The two heroes awaited the enemy atop the big bridge. The forested world had the same majestic feeling as always. In the face of the upcoming battle, the two showed clear hostility towards their foes. No more pre-battle chat.

They had no idea where the Vertex would come from. Sumi climbed to the highest position on the bridge, and started shooting with her bow. She moved a bit far from Sonoko, but they both knew it was better than having the enemy suddenly attack them again.

—Sonocchi! One coming from the front!

Ahead in the distance, a giant with a strange form appeared. It faintly resembled some kind of living creature.

—Doesn't seem to be any others~?

—We're good... for now!

The moment she confirmed the presence of the enemy, Sumi rained arrows down on it. Soaring like missiles, they pierced the Vertex. Sonoko observed the enemy's movements. It started violently spinning the cloth-like part sticking out of its body. It acted as a shield, protecting it. And it immediately repelled all of Sumi's shots.

—Is that all you can do!!

Sumi kept firing.

The Vertex deflected all her arrows in retaliation, but...

—HAAAAAaaaAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA!!!

Sumi howled once again. She continued shooting as she howled. So fiercely that her fingers started bleeding.



However, Gin, covered in blood, must have endured dozens, no hundreds of times the amount of pain. This was nothing. As if trying to keep up with her fervor, Sumi's brain seemed to have released some kind of limiter. The Vertex, no longer able to handle the incoming attacks, was skewered all over. Its body was being torn apart in the face of Sumi's immense firepower.

—Wasshi~... Amazing... Me too.

Witnessing that sight, Sonoko got fired up as well.

The Vertex was slowly backing off. Sumi remained alert the whole time. She knew the beast could still fight back. From what looked like its tail, the Vertex expelled some sort of lump, with a mass about the size of a curled up human, and fired it towards Sumi. Sumi calmly shot it down. It exploded mid-air without ever reaching her. The Vertex continued firing the lumps at her, while Sumi, bearing the pain of her bloodied fingers, blew them all up.

—It seems to be focusing all its attention on me.

The other hero didn't let this chance go to waste, and charged at the monster's torso.

—Here I go~~!!

Sonoko targeted and attacked the parts that started regenerating with unmatched accuracy. In addition to Sumi's rain of arrows, the million stabs from Sonoko's spear made the Vertex let out an eerie groan. It started moving its cloth-like part, in an attempt to chase away Sonoko, who was clinging to it. However, she was fully aware of its capabilities as she'd been watching the exchange with Sumi for quite a while, and knew exactly how to deal with it.

(This is so easy, the athletic courses from the trip seem more challenging~)  
Agile as a butterfly. Deadly as a snake. Those words perfectly describe Sonoko.

Sumi checked her surroundings once more.

—No further enemies in sight. Resuming support fire!!!

She coordinated her attacks with Sonoko's movements. At this rate, the enemy will turn around and leave at any moment. Their victory was certain.

But the Vertex wouldn't retreat.

(...It's not going away~?!)

(Our attacks...are not strong enough.)

They're once again reminded of the fury of the axe blows that drove away so many enemies. But they still couldn't give up.

—Guts!! That's what being a hero is all about.

That's what their friend would say.

Sumi bit her lip, bearing the pain in her fingers, and continued shooting. During the exchange with the enemy, Sonoko caught a glimpse of the bridge's surface. A red trail. It was the noble proof that her comrade accomplished her mission.

—Yes, it's all about guts~!

She clenched her teeth so hard you would think they'd shatter under the pressure, as she swung her spear.

A few hours later.

The Vertex was struggling just to get to the other side of the wall. The girls collapsed on the bridge from exhaustion. They were covered in wounds, but none posed a risk to their lives. It took all they had to drive away a single enemy.

—We were lucky... Only one showed up today.

—Yes... If there were any others~...

—...

She didn't even want to think about it. In the end, they managed to chase it away. They sighed in relief, while making sure they wouldn't lose their consciousness. They still had to see their friend off.

The world returned to normal, and the two of them went back.

\*\*\*

A few days later.

After they healed, and were done with their examinations, Sumi and Sonoko were called to their classroom at Shinju-kan. School had ended already, so no one else was there. Only their homeroom teacher, who had been waiting for them.

—Thank you... For not failing your duties at such a time.

—It would be rude to Mino-san if we did nothing~

Sumi nods.

—We couldn't get it in time for the last battle, but Taisha has been working on an update for the Hero system. We didn't manage to find reinforcements due to an aptitude problem. But Nogi-san, Washio-san. You two will be able to manifest more power as heroes. Your weapons will also change and you'll gain new abilities. To put it simply, you'll get closer to the Shinju-sama, and be able to gain further divine powers.

—That sounds really amazing~

—It is. I think it should be so much of a power-up that you'll be able to handle multiple enemies.

—Thank you very much. If that's the case.

—Yes, we'll be fine by ourselves.

—...

—Sensei, is something wrong~?

—You know, at first I thought the heroes' duty would be too much of a burden for 6th graders like you.

She looked at the two and continued.

—... But after going through so much, you two are still determined to do it...

The teacher held the two in her arms.

—You two are real heroes. I'm so proud of you!

—... Ahaha, this might be the first time Sensei has praised us like this~...

—Sensei...



—But Sensei~. I think Mino-san was the greatest of us all. She drove away three enemies all by herself...

Sonoko pointed at the empty desk, trembling.

—So... please don't forget about her... She was so strong... and amazing... We're not two, but three heroes....

Sonoko's eyes overflowed with tears.

—... I'm sorry, Nogi-san. I take it back. You three are real heroes.

—... Gin.

Sumi couldn't hold back and burst into tears as well. Reminded of that smile as strong as the summer sun. Losing her made her realize how much she loved her.

—Gin.... Gin....

She sobs as if expecting an answer. But there was none. No matter how much she cried, it wasn't enough.





# Chapter 6: Faeries



第6話 「せいれい」

鷺尾須美は  
勇者である

作/タカヒロ  
イラスト/BUNBUN

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***CENSORED***

*I received a lot of gifts sent from the Taisha. My family also gained more power in the Taisha, it seems.*

*This special treatment surprised me then. But, after looking into it, it wasn't anything special.*

*In any era, ■■■■■■■■ receive kindnesses.*

*Hero's Memoir 298.8.12*

---

Sumi and Sonoko went to Taisha's training facility. From the fundamental disciplines to spear swinging practice, after finishing everything from start to end, Sonoko was now left gasping for breath.

—Haah, haah, haa...

—Sonocchi. You should drink some water.

Sumi put the cold drink against the back of Sonoko's neck.

—Ahyan~ It's cold~!

—Fufu, your voice's amusing.

—Thanks, Wasshi... gulp gulp, puhah, mm~ I live for this drink!

Sonoko busted out a smile befitting summer.

—Just now, you looked very much like Gin; it takes skill to talk like a middle-aged man.

—I see, guess I still need to practice more~

After continuing to cry over Gin, Sumi and Sonoko's tears finally stopped. Gin's soul had been embraced by the Shinju-sama, and was now watching over their efforts. That was what Sensei told them. Moreover, if they closed their eyelids, they could always see Gin in their heart. Since they realized that, the two girls had pressed down their sadness and returned to their daily life.

—... It's summer, Wasshi~. It's August already.

—I wonder how hot it will get today.

The two looked up at the sky. A big self-assertive cumulonimbus. An endlessly extending blue.

—It really is summer...

Sonoko said again.

—The cicadas are also in their top forms. You can hear them from every direction.

—Do you know the way to tell whether a cicada that has fallen to the ground is still healthy or not?

—... I'm not very good with bugs.

—The cicada that has its legs open is the one that's still healthy~

—I don't think people who are bad with bugs would go and stare at fallen cicadas in the first place.

—Ahaha, I guess you're right~

—Let's resume training and master the new power that we've finally been granted with.

—Yeah. There's no point updating the Hero system when we ourselves are not competent, right~?

The girls faced their duty with all of their energy.

"It's summer holiday, let's go somewhere to play". That would be a natural thought for an elementary 6th grader to have, but not for the current Sumi and Sonoko.

During break times, the two would chat about summer as much as possible, to at least have a bit of the season's taste.

—But, but, I wonder what we'll look like with the new Hero system~ Maybe like those warriors in the old era~

—! I would be quite happy if it turned out like that.

—Happy~!? Why are you blushing~?

—But Sensei said that unlike our efficiency, our outward appearances wouldn't change much from the current Hero system.

—Oh~ Did she?

—She also said that our weapons would change a little bit, and be attached with supports... I wonder what she meant by supports.

The two's new power. Intending to put it into actual combat, they were now entering the final adjustments stage. In order to master it right away, Sumi and Sonoko were building up their bodies. Since it was right in summer holiday at Shinju-kan, the school that the girls were attending, they had plenty of time for training.

Maybe out of a bit of consideration, the Vertexes hadn't come attacking since Gin's funeral.

—Ahh, when I said supports, I was talking about the faeries.

In the staff room, the homeroom teacher answered her students' question smoothly.

—Fa-faeries... you say~?

Sonoko started hurriedly.

—Do-don't tell me, you mean those that go around and curse... Uwawa~

—That would be ghosts. Calm down, Sonocchi.

—Huh, you're so cool. Are you fine with ghosts, Wasshi~?

—Yes. Instead of air-conditioning, I often read or listen to ghost stories.

—So cool~ You're a hero.

—From my point of view, you being fine with bugs is much cooler, Sonocchi. You are the hero.

—Well, about the faeries... It's hard to explain them through words alone, so please look forward to when you get the new Hero system.

—Sensei's met up with a hurdle~

—I understood. Thank you for telling us as much as you can.



—Leaving that aside, there's this special duty for you two.

The homeroom teacher spoke formally. Sumi spontaneously stood at attention.

—I command you two to go and have fun at the festival tonight.

—Eh...?

Sumi unintentionally let out her voice at the unexpected words.

—You know, right? A festival is being held today.

—But the duty of us heroes is...

The homeroom teacher interrupted Sumi's words and looked at her intently.

—Since what happened with Minowa-san, I understand and feel reassured that you have always been training to prepare for an emergency... But isn't it fine, to rest once in a while...? Rather, I think it's better to rest moderately so that when something happens, you can pull out your full power.

—Sensei, I'm...

—As I said, that's an order. Please go to the festival. Taisha has also given their permission. Actually, the shrine that this festival's held at has the same meaning as Taisha. It feels much easier if you think of it that way, right? "I have got to go to the festival", okay?

The homeroom teacher knew that she had to be this overbearing to make the stubborn Sumi agree.

—... I understand.

—Sensei, thank you very much~

—Enjoy yourselves.

\*\*\*

While basking in the evening sun, Sonoko and Sumi walked the road to the shrine. From the strait, the salty wind blew in with a nice sensation.

—... Is it fine? To go play at a festival like this...

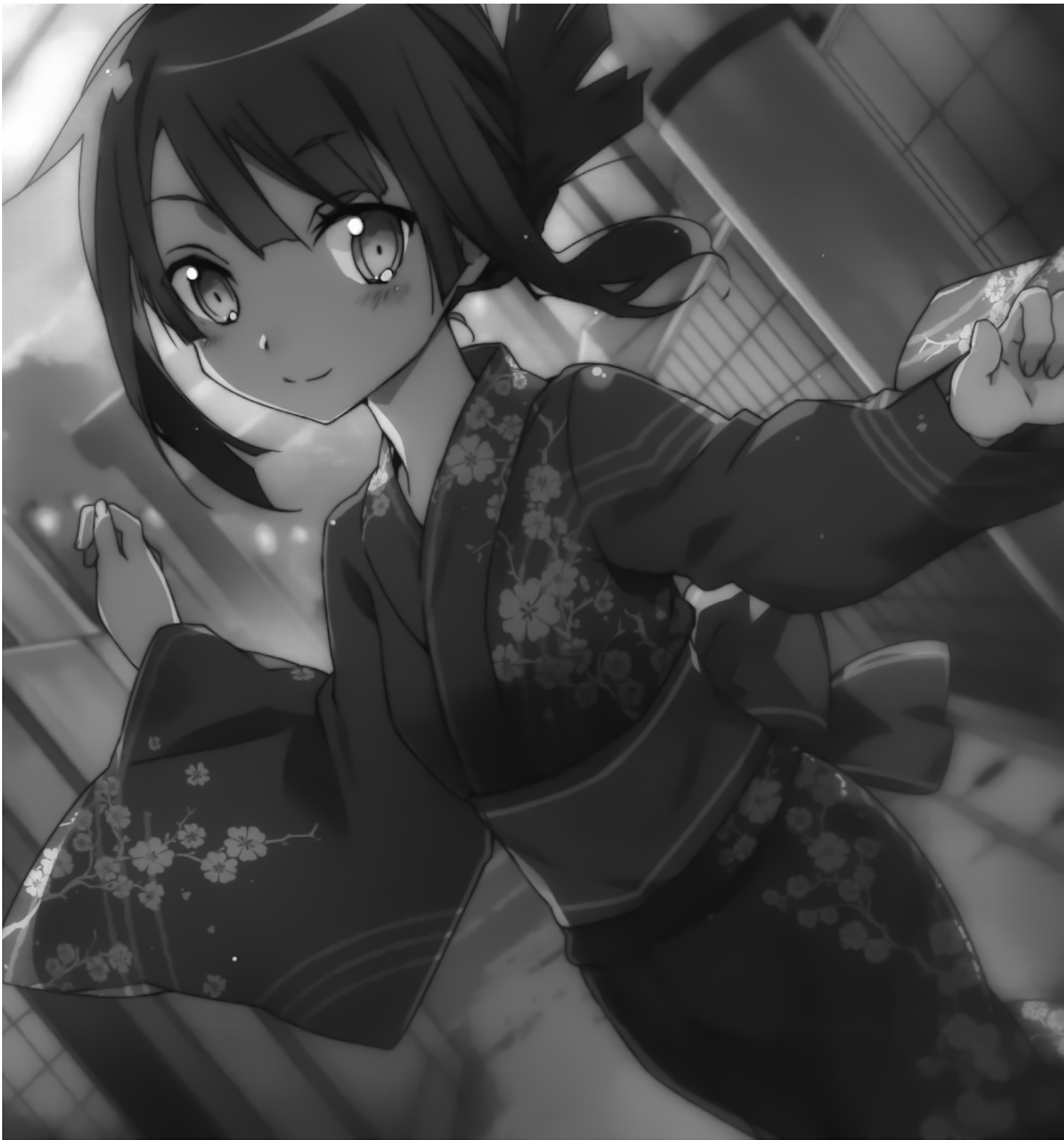
—Even though you said that, Wasshii, you're properly wearing a yukata~

—My parents made me wear it... That said though, I'm actually enjoying it.

Sumi honestly admitted her feelings.

—Yeah, yeah, it looks good on you, Wasshi, you look like a doll. Can you try spinning around~?

—L-like this?



Spin, spin

—Waa~ You're in high spirits~ Time for a picture.

Sonoko quickly took out her terminal.

—Hey, hey, photographs are prohibited, it's embarrassing!

—Ehh~ And I was thinking to use it as my lock screen...

—It's embarrassing so don't!

—But my current screen is also you, Wasshi, see, this one when you were eating Udon.

—Whoa, stop, it really is embarrassing.

—It's my phone, I can use it however I like~

—Jeez... Then I will use you as my lock screen, Sonocchi. Since that yukata looks good on you, it's going to be an award-winning picture, fufu.

Sumi grinned.

—Waa~ Is it fine to use me~?

Sonoko smiled back at her sweetly.

—Don't you feel embarrassed at all...!?

In a red dyed world, the girls innocently played about cheerfully.

\*\*\*

The shrine's grounds were packed with stalls, and crowded with a great number of people.

—This scene, this heat, it really feels like we're at a festival~ I'm glad I've been able to protect this world.

Looking at all the parents and their children having fun, Sonoko nodded while going "Yes, yes"

—Ah, Yachou-kun is at the reprinting stall.

—Tsubaki-san is over there~

—At this rate, all of our classmates will be here.

—This is a festival after all. I'm so glad that we came~

—But do you know, Wasshi? Festivals in the old era were never as lively as this. Seems like it was impossible for everyone in a class to all come~

With a flash of light, Sumi's eyes glittered.

—Of course I know. As I have said several times, I'm... very well-informed on things in the old era.

—Ohh, as expected~

—Because the Shinju-sama didn't exist back then, things like offering your gratitude through prayers, or even the act of worshipping itself weren't established for each and every citizen.

—...

—Wh-what's wrong, Sonocchi?

—Nah, I'm just watching your speaking face, Wasshi, it's kinda become a habit now.

—How should I respond after being told something like that? Jeez.

Sumi blushed slightly.

—...Hm, Sonocchi?

When she looked around her surroundings, Sonoko had been swept away to the front by the wave of people. Take your eyes off her for a moment and this happens.

—U-ah~

—Seriously, what are you doing? ... Where has your battle's sharpness gone to in this kind of situation?

Sumi took a firm hold of Sonoko's hand.

—You better not let go of my hand.

—Yeah, I almost became a lost child.

—If you get lost, then I will ask them to broadcast the following: "Lost hero, Nogi Sonoko-san, your friend is waiting"

Sumi chuckled.

—Uwaa, I absolutely won't get lost~

Sonoko tightly squeezed back Sumi's hand.

Faint light emitting from hanging paper lanterns. Along with tuneful sounds of the festival's naruko [\[6\]](#). Immersed in a literal festival mood, the heroes entrusted with a heavy duty, Sumi and Sonoko, became normal children again.

\*\*\*

At the shooting stall.

—That giant anteater plushy is what you want, right, Sonocchi?

—It's an armadillo, Wasshi.

—Anyway, I understand, just leave it to me.

—Yeah, but... it's hard to aim with that gun. I just ended up hitting the shopkeeper old man~

—That old man is not a prize, you know. So we have two bullets, huh...?

The first bullet, instead of hitting the targeted plushy, flew somewhere else.

—It really feels like the impact point is slightly off. Then in advance, if I shoot here...

The second bullet splendidly hit the plushy.

—Ohhh, as expected of an archer, you're so good at shooting~

—I'm glad I got it...

At the cotton candy stall.

—Ahh, this taste, so good~

Sonoko totally got addicted to the cotton candy.

The two were sharing one cotton candy at first, but Sonoko just kept glancing at the stall.

—It's fine to buy more if you want to. The orders are to have fun, after all.

—! Right~? Holding back is bad for your body, right~?

—Excuse me~ I'd like another cotton candy, ah, that flower-shaped one would be fine~

Sumi was watching over Sonoko's smile.

At the colored chicks stall.

*Cheep cheep cheep cheep*

—Th-this level of cuteness is atrocious, Wasshi.

Sonoko was staring at the chicks with hearts in her eyes.

—Jasmine is the cutest, right~?

—Looks like you have given it a name already, but to keep an animal, you need to be prepared.

—Yeah, but I want to be with it~ See~

Sonoko swiftly placed the chick on top of her head.

—Wai, what are you doing, Sonocchi? It's shaking terribly!

Sumi reflexively took a spectacular photo with her terminal.

—Ehehe, I want it to be on my head like this forever.

—Sonocchi. It is going to become a chicken, you know?

—Hauah! That's right~!! It's not going to be like this forever~!

—Seems like you were blinded by its cuteness...

At the goldfish scooping stall.

—Goldfishes... are nice, aren't they? They are elegant.

(It's rare to see Wasshi wanting something! She didn't react at the colored chicks, but responds to goldfishes. This kind of refined taste is just so like her.)

—Let's challenge it, Wasshi!

—But because of our duty, I don't have time to take care of an animal...

—I think goldfishes are pretty simple, though. You can just ask your parents to feed them for you.

—... You're right, thanks. Then, just for a bit...

Sumi tried to have a go at goldfish scooping...

*Rip*

The paper got torn right away.

—Ahh... It's unexpectedly hard to adjust your strength.

—Wasshi, is this the one you want? Your aim pretty high... Here!!

With a refined move, Sonoko swiftly scooped up the targeted goldfish.

Her skill was as fascinating as always.

—This is my present for you, Wasshi.

—Thank you, Sonocchi.

Sumi took the vinyl bag that had the goldfish in it.

—You got this plushy for me after all~ It's a draw.

—Still, you really are skillful. Those stalls over there must also be easy for you, right, Sonocchi?

Sumi pointed at stalls such as super ball scooping and water yoyo fishing.

—Okay, watch, it's my time to shine~!

Sonoko magnificently broke the records of all stalls.

*Beeeww*, they heard.

—Ah!

And with that exclamation, *boom*, a big shock reverberated through the shrine.

The two looked at each other.

—The fireworks' already began~



—We were too entranced by these stalls.

—What do you want to do now, Sonocchi? Move to a quiet place and watch the fireworks? Or stay...

—So beautiful~...

Sonoko had already been captivated by those large colorful flowers in the night sky.

—... Staying here is fine, huh?

Sumi also looked up at the sky.

One by one, the fireworks were launched at the sky, and disappeared. Dyeing the night sky with various colors.

—Let's ascertain the pyrotechnician's craftsmanship with our eyes.

—Ohh~ There's nothing but rapid fire now~ My stomach is shaken~ But I'm glad, it seems like we don't have to fulfill our duty~

—If they fail to read the mood and come this time, too, I will dismember them.

—Ahaha, that's a nice one~

This time, their happy time wasn't interrupted. The fireworks were free to color the summer's night sky.

—... Ahh, the fireworks are over~

—so exciting. and, after a while, so sad - cormorant fishing [\[7\]](#)

—Oh, that's by Basho-san from the Matsuo-san household, right, Wasshi? It's lonely when the fireworks are over~

—Well, we can just watch them again next year.

Sumi said, as if to convince herself.

—! Yeah, let's do our best for that too~

—You're right... After we're back, let's start training right away.

—After all, we're completely refreshed now, right~?

Sonoko hit her loot, the water yoyo, repeatedly.

—For now, let's gather again after dropping off our luggage...

Looking at the goldfish in her hand, Sumi bitterly smiled.

\*\*\*

The end of the festival signaled the end of summer. Sumi and Sonoko had dedicated that season to training. For the two, it was a summer full of severe drills. But in a way, it was also fulfilling. Even the adults had to admire their earnestness.

And now, that summer was ending.

—Since I will be at a training camp for a short while, please look after this goldfish for me.

Sumi politely bowed to her parents.

—Sumi... you're still so distant. In a time like this, it's fine to just say "Mother, I'll leave the goldfish to you". That's how parent and child are, right?

—... Yeah, thank you.

—It's an important duty. Do your best, Sumi.

—Yes! I swear on the name of the Washio.

\*\*\*

—“From now on, in order to synchronize your breathing, you two will start cohabitating...” they say~ Please take care of me, my dear.

—We're not married, though.

—Ehehe, but... I don't have a single life skill so you might have to spoil me, Wasshi.

—It's okay, Sonocchi. Because I've decided to discipline you, I'll teach you about lots of things.

—So-somehow, your sense of duty's on fire~?

From what their homeroom teacher said, it seemed like it had been decided that the new Hero system would be granted to them in September. Because

this update required highly delicate adjustments, it'd take quite some time to finish. They must be performing enhancements now in order to bring the war to an end, Sumi concluded.

\*\*\*

At night, two futon were lined up for bedtime. Sumi turned off the room's lights. Thanks to the hard drills before noon, it looked like she wouldn't have trouble falling asleep. However, her partner Sonoko was in high spirits.

—It's our precious bedtime, Wasshi!

—Wait, aren't we just going to sleep now?

—But it's our long-awaited free time, let's chat~ How about continuing the other day's love talk?

—... Since then, have we ever had enough spare time to fall in love...?

—... Ahaha, it's true that we haven't~ Well, but even if we did have time... the result would probably still be the same...

—Cough, didn't we promise to not say that out loud?

—Don't you have any interesting stories? Wasshi?

—Interesting... stories... huh? Deep inside a certain mountain, there was a hunter called Gosuke...

—Just to make sure, it's not a ghost story, right?

—It's not.

—Phew.

—One night, Gosuke was setting up a fire in the mountain, and before he knew it, a young woman was beside him...

—Eh, this is not a ghost story, right~?

—It's not.

—Phew.

—The young woman opened her mouth widely and said: "Are you huunting? How many bullets have you shot from that guun?"

—You're lying, this is clearly a ghost story~!

—There are even battles in it, so it makes for a fun ghost story.

—Stop~!

Sonoko pulled over her futon and rolled into a ball.

—... Fufu, good night, Sonocchi.

Thinking she could go to sleep at ease now, Sumi closed her eyes. She could talk to Sonoko anytime; it didn't have to be now. The drowsiness came over her instantly. Little by little, Sumi fell asleep.



—...Wasshi.

Like it was about to disappear, Sonoko's voice reached the slumbering Sumi's ears.

—Hey... Wasshi...

—...? What's wrong, Sonocchi?

—Because of your scary story, I can't sleep.

—Eh? Are you in third grade, Sonocchi?

—I'll be a middle-schooler soon~

—And yet you're still like this?

—Yeah~

—Can I sleep in your futon~?

—Good grief, how can a hero get frightened by a ghost story?

—Well then, if a big bug shows up in the room, I'm not gonna let you run outside, okay~?

—Ugh... Here you go. Somehow, it feels like you've grasped my weakness.

—Ehehe, excuse~me.

Sonoko squirmed her way into the futon. Luckily, the wind was cool so it didn't get hot.

—This is the first time I've slept in the same futon with someone other than my parents~

—It's the same for me.

—But I feel totally relaxed. Wasshi's futon feels safe, like home~. This is a big discovery.

It seemed like Sonoko's spirits were rising.

—Wasshi, your hands are warm, but your feet are a bit cold~

—That doesn't mean that you can cling to me, it's hot.

—Hm, I didn't know you had a mole here, Wasshi. It looks kinda cute~

—Ahh, geez, stop squirming.

Instead of sleeping, Sonoko just kept calling out “Wasshi, Wasshi”.

Possessing a strong sense of duty, Sumi properly answered her every time.

—I’m wide awake now. Since it came to this, Sonocchi, you better keep me company thoroughly.

—Zzz... Zzzz~~

—... Hey there!

Sumi was astonished, and planned to pinch Sonoko’s cheek, but she couldn’t bring herself to detest that defenseless sleeping face, and ended up acquitting her. While gazing at Sonoko’s sleeping face, Sumi thought about what would happen from now on.

(Even so, those Vertexes still haven’t come to attack; I wonder what they are doing... Well, I can’t help being pessimistic, but the new system’s adjustments could be done in the meantime.) Sumi closed her eyes. The sound of bugs crying. Amidst a quite night. Summer is ending. That was what Sumi felt as she received the cold night wind.

(Next year, I’m going watch fireworks with Sonocchi again...) \*\*\*

...At the same time.

A messenger from Taisha came to Sumi’s house. After hearing the words of the messenger, Sumi’s parents bursted into tears. The same thing also happened at the Nogi household.

At that moment, neither Sumi nor Sonoko knew the true meaning of their parents’ tears.

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*Era of the Gods, Year 298.*

*The calendar was heading towards autumn, towards the decisive battle.*

*(Chapter 6: End)*

# Chapter 7: Promise



鷺尾須美は  
勇者である

第7話 「やくそく」

作／タカヒロ  
イラスト／BUNBUN



***CENSORED***

*It was after I ■■■■ the ■■■■ that I learned.*

*That in the past, it wasn't ■■■■ that inflicted pain onto ■■■■, but ■■■■.*

*And that the cause for that was ■■■■ from the start.*

*It's a bit similar to the story of ■■■■ of ■■■■, I thought.*

*Hero's memoir 298.9.21*

---

The girls were cleansing their bodies in the waterfall. The waterfall flowing nearby the Divine Tree was off limits to everyone save for a few high ranked members in Taisha.

—Hyaa~! So cold, so cold~

—Sonocchi, calm down.

—Eh? What was that? I can't hear you over the sound of the water.

—We're meeting the Shinju-sama; we need to sharpen our minds, Sonocchi.

—Yeah. Good thing it's still the hot season though. I wouldn't want to enter a waterfall during winter~

—I wouldn't particularly mind, since I bathe in cold water every morning.

—Uwa~, I thought you were mature but that's a whole other level. You're like a Monk in training, Wasshi~

—I highly recommend you try it as well, Sonocchi. It's good for both body and mind.

—I will thoroughly consider your offer.

Era of the Gods, year 298 - Autumn.

Sumi and Sonoko, having received their Hero system upgrade, will be meeting the Divine Tree for a "greeting". The Washio and Nogi households had great authority within Taisha, so they were allowed direct contact with the Divine Tree in times of emergency.

Sumi and Sonoko stood before the Divine Tree. It grows huge during forestization, but it's usually not that big a tree.

—...

The girls were overwhelmed by its majestic aura. Being a tree, it wasn't gonna speak. But its presence was so magnificent you'd instinctively get on your knees. In this new era, the Divine Tree was the source of all blessings. It is because of its presence, because its roots extend throughout the land, that crops bear fruit and fish swim about in this world, surrounded by a wall. This world cannot survive without the Divine Tree.

Thus, people named this time the Era of the Gods.

(In order to protect mankind from the deadly virus spreading throughout the world, many local Gods combined, became the Divine Tree... enclosed Shikoku with a wall, put up a barrier...) The end of the Christian era, and the start of a new one.

Sumi was reminded of the holy tale of the birth of the tree that they were taught. Even Sonoko was feeling nervous. Having received the Miko's permission, the two touched the tree. This was the first time they were this close to it.

—The Shinju-sama's pretty warm, Wasshi~

Sonoko regained her composure after touching the tree. Fearsome but also strangely warm.

—...

Sumi nervously touched the tree.

—... What's wrong Wasshi~? Are you okay?

Sonoko said as she noticed her partner's state.

—.... Something is... flowing into my head.... Uu... Kuh....What is this...?

—Eh...? Into your head...? You mean you're talking to the Shinju-sama?!

—I... don't know.

An endlessly extending sky flashed into Sumi's mind. At that moment, she lost consciousness.

\*\*\*

Waking up.

—... This is... home?

—Ah, Wasshi~ you woke up! Thank God.

—Sonocchi.

—How are you feeling~?

—Hn...

Sumi got on her feet, and tried moving her body around. There were no abnormalities.

—I'm fine. Actually, hungry.

—Phe~w, thank God. I was so worried I lied down and fell asleep next to you~

—You fell asleep? Not that there's anything wrong with that.

—You fainted right after you touched the Shinju-sama.

—Yes... I felt something entering my head... Like endless stars falling... Then I got dizzy...

—Stars? The stars in the sky?

Sumi nods.

—That was an oracle, Washio-san.

Their homeroom teacher was standing by the door.

—Sensei, you came all the way here. I'm sorry for making you worry...

—Washio-san not only has the aptitude to become a Hero, but you can also become a Miko, passing on the will of the Shinju-sama.

—Me, a Miko...

—Uwa~ you're so amazing Wasshi~! Your coordination strength exceeds that of Akechi Mitsuhide from the old era~

—... You know who that is?

—Ehehe, somehow.

—Cough. It certainly is amazing, even for a direct descendent of the Washio, however...

—However?

—The contents of your vision are worrying. What you saw was an image of stars falling from the sky, right? And it wasn't just one, but a large number of them...!

—Y-yes.

Sumi gulped at the rare sight of her teacher's tension.

—How were the stars falling? Up close or in the distance?

—They fell so close, it was pretty scary.

—That's an emergency message, indicating there will be an enemy attack in the very next few days.

—!!

—To begin with, they were supposed to have come by now... Looks like they were preparing to attack all at once.

Sumi and Sonoko stared at each other.

—What else did you see? By analyzing the specifics we can have more details. For example, the number of stars is said to indicate the number of enemies.

\*\*\*

Based on Sumi's testimony, it was concluded that in the next few days, there would be a multi-Vertex attack.

The same pattern as the time Gin had to sacrifice herself.

—Look like it's the final battle~

—There's nothing to be scared of... We completed our new Hero system training. We also have new weapons and more firepower.

Sumi says, as if trying to convince herself.

—I will still be using a spear, but you have it rough, Wasshi~, with your weapon changing.

—I’ve been tinkering around with “Shirogane” for quite a while, so my body got used to it. It’s gonna be fine.

Shirogane, written with the kanji for Gin (銀/Silver), is the name Sumi gave her new weapon. By naming the weapon after her friend, she would pump herself up.

—So, have you decided what we’re gonna do until the battle~?

Taisha allowed the heroes to spend their time as they wished until the next battle, following the last oracle.

—I think I’ll do as usual, go to school, study, talk to everyone, hang out with Sonocchi...

—Me too~

—I mean, after we defeat the enemy we’re just gonna go back to our normal lives.

—Yep, there’s no need to break our rhythm for no reason~

Even if multiple enemies were coming, Sumi and Sonoko were confident they could drive them away. After the loss of Minowa Gin, the new Hero system was developed with the idea of preventing the heroes from dying. A new addition was the “faeries”, said to be clones of the Divine Tree. One for each hero, they’re meant to protect them from Vertex attacks.

Furthermore, by using their powers as heroes, energy would build up, allowing them to use a new ability called "Mankai" [\[8\]](#). It is said that one’s strength during Mankai is equal to a God’s. By going Mankai many times, they would level up as heroes, or so Sumi and Sonoko were told.

With the protection of the faeries and the power of Mankai. The new Hero system not only had basic power-ups, but came with all these new features. The girls had performed their everyday training to be able to use those powers. That was the basis for their self-confidence.

—We’ve trained hard every day, we’re gonna be fine.

—Yep, we'll go Mankai and blow the enemy out of the water~

Even with all the new power-ups, they were still slightly anxious. But the heroes weren't alone. They had each other, and Gin inside their heart. Sumi and Sonoko decided to spend their next few days as always.

—Speaking of which, you didn't have any manga in your room, Wasshi~

—But I did.

—All you had was war stories of the old era. Those are like textbooks~

They switched to their everyday conversations.

\*\*\*

5 in the morning.

Sumi went to bathe in the well, in the backyard.

—I wonder if Sonocchi's doing the same. No, she definitely wouldn't... I bet she's still asleep.

She was in a pleasant mood, thinking of her friend so early in the morning. After cleansing her body, she fed the fish she got from the festival and went on a walk to the shrine. The cats on the shrine grounds were energetic as usual.

—Jiroumaru, Saburoumaru, I'm doing my best.

Sumi called out to the cats by the names she selfishly gave them. They still responded with a meow.

After returning home, Sumi started preparing for breakfast.

—Sumi, you know, you don't have to make breakfast anymore.

—That won't do. If you switched back to toast my day would be ruined. Rice for breakfast, udon for lunch, botamochi as a snack and rice for dinner. That is my ideal.







—I promise I'll make something you like. I could even have Taisha send in a traditional restaurant chef.

—That's some amazing special treatment.

—Your duty is that important.

—But, we're not the only ones with a duty. Everyone has a job they're working on. Being treated so special as if we're the only ones to thank for this peace...

—... You are special; you're a Hero chosen by the Shinju-sama. You should feel proud.

—...

—Ah... Sorry for bringing this up. I'm going now. Put in a lot of meat, Sumi.

—No can do. You're getting extra vegetables, mom.

—Why!! It's so good in the morning...

—You need to eat well and balanced, mom.

Despite their rank as Washio, Sumi loved the combination of her frank mother and strict father. The two of them combined made a perfectly balanced couple.

—... Still, I get the feeling all the ingredients have been nothing but expensive stuff. This is the first time I see a clam this big.

—They're for you, from Taisha.

—Taisha again... Is it really okay?

—It's fine.

Sumi's mother petted her head.

—It's been like that since morning. Was it the same at your house too, Sonocchi?

—We got a lo~t of stuff. They even said they'll be sending Kimonos next~

—Special treatment, huh...

Shinju-kan. Class 6-1.

Sumi was chatting with Sonoko next to her. Even after they changed seats, they ended up next to each other. Sonoko hoped she'd be close to Sumi, and it ended up happening. Must be the will of the Shinju-sama.

Sonoko was dozing off during class. The teacher would send her to stand outside if she spotted her. That sort of education was allowed in the new era, to a certain degree. Sumi subtly shook her awake.

(That was close, thanks, Wasshi~)

(Seriously, you never change, Sonocchi. As a leader, you should be more careful...) —Washio-san, what are you whispering about?

—Ha... I-I'm sorry.

—Next time you'll stand outside.

—Yes...

(Don't let it get to you, Wasshi~)

(...)

(Awawa, your eyes are scary~)

It was time for lunch.

Sumi and Sonoko weren't on cafeteria duty, so they stood in line as usual. Brown sugar buns and Zhajiangmian, Hijiki Kakiage, Mini-tomato and orange juice were being served.

—Oh?

Sumi felt discomfort. Hijiki Kakiage is known for being an exquisite side dish, and her plate clearly contained one more than the others. When she looked over at the boy who served her, he gave her a thumbs up.

"I'm not sure about the details, but do your best"

She got his message. He was rooting for her inside his heart. The old Sumi

would probably have returned the extra food. But the current her thankfully accepted it.

During lunch break, she and her classmates played by drawing on the blackboard.

—Nogi-san, your drawings are... Surreal...

—Ehehe, really~?

Since the time during the school trip, everyone knew that Sonoko's artistic sense was impossible for others to reproduce.

—You can tell they're pretty good, but they're a bit crazy... Hmm, Nogi-san, you're the Picasso of Shinju-kan.

—I'm glad~

—Washio-san is just simply good. What kind of boat is this you're drawing?

—It's the Second Shoukaku Class aircraft carrier warship, Zuikaku.

—Eh, uuh... I don't really get it but it's good. It looks pretty real.

—I'm trying to draw it as close to reality as possible.

—Wasshi~ draws the body, while I draw the soul~

The classmates admired Sonoko, as she said something of the sort.

\*\*\*

After school, the two headed to the shopping mall, Ines.

This place was the symbol of everyday life for the two of them. Sumi and Sonoko knew their way around the place after the Ines Master, Gin, had showed them around. Gin had taught them about all kinds of cool spots, such as the arcade machine on the 4th floor where you can play a super long game for only 50 yen, or the place on the 3rd floor community center where you can sit down and relax.

—Wasshi~ What time is it right now?

—5:20, we still have 10 more minutes.

They always went to the food court on the first floor past 5:30. At that time,

the part-timer shifts would change, and the kind lady in charge would always give them extra. That was not the case on Saturdays though. But rather than worrying about money, the two enjoyed moving according to their battle plan.

Sonoko stopped in front of the 100 Yen shop.

—Look, they have new stuff in the toys corner~

—You're right.

—The party goods section has been enhanced too~

A sign read "Please try it for yourself".

—It's autumn, so they must have brought in new stuff in preparation for the pumpkin festival.

—It's called Halloween, not pumpkin festival~. Ah, this top hat would look great on you. You should learn a pigeon magic trick.

—You should put on this sparkly one and dance, Sonocchi.

They tried them for themselves, just like the sign said.



The food court was filled with students and families.

—Hmm. Soy Sauce flavored gelato really doesn't feel right to me.

—Ahahah, Mino-san is not pleased.

—Sonocchi, let me have some of your Vanilla one.

—Wa! Wasshi~ took mine~!

—Fufu...

Sumi had already mastered the skill of stealing other people's gelato.

—I have grown stronger.

Sumi nodded to herself.

—Now is my chance, while you're distracted~

Sonoko swiftly stole the soy sauce gelato from Sumi's hand.

\*\*\*

—Uwa~, sundown looks so pretty~

—I wonder if the Vertexes are coming today.

—Who knows~. Maybe they'll come while we're taking a bath~

—That would be rough.

Sumi and Sonoko dropped by the seaside park at the end of the day. During the old era, this park was a memorial for the completion of the Seto Grand Bridge. It had a great view of both the Seto Sea and bridge, making it a popular sightseeing spot. It was an everyday sight for the locals, but it evoked a special feeling in Sonoko and Sumi.

—Say, Wasshi~

—What's wrong, Sonocchi, all of a sudden?

—Thank you~. I am so glad I met you guys. I'll be in your care.

—... Sonocchi.

Sumi took a deep breath.

—... I am the one who should be thanking you.

Sumi's words, like Sonoko's, expressed her gratitude towards her friends. They had been through so much together, ever since the first enemy attack. None of them would have been able to bear the burden alone.

—I'll be in your care too, Sonocchi.

—Yeah...

A fresh sea breeze blew between the two of them.

And then it stopped.

—....! This is...

—... They're here~. My watch is frozen.

Time halted. The enemy was attacking. Shikoku turned into Jukai by the power of the Divine Tree.

—Still, the Vertex were slightly more considerate this time around. We were able to enjoy our day.

—We're in top form too.

The twilight sky had forestized. The two knew they would be facing multiple enemies. Despite that, their hearts were overflowing with courage.

—Wasshi~, I'm counting on your support.

—Leave it to me.

—I would have liked for us to do the back-to-back pose though~

—I also would have preferred to have you by my side.

Due to the nature of their weapons, the two had to fight away from each other.

—Take this then, Wasshi~

Sonoko undid her ribbon and gave it to Sumi.

—Thank you. I'm feeling safer already.

She grasped her friend's ribbon tightly.

—You can put it on if you want~

—I'll do it when the fight's over. Praise me if it looks good on me, Sonocchi.

—Okay!

The attackers are Vertex, the natural enemy of mankind.

The defenders are the two heroes chosen by the Gods.

---

*Era of the Gods, Year 298.*

*The renowned "Battle of the Seto Grand Bridge" was about to begin.*

*(Chapter 7: End)*



# Chapter 8: Friends

鷺尾須美は  
勇者である

第8話 「ともだち」

作/タカヒロ  
イラスト/BUNBUN



***CENSORED***

*The act of fighting while ■■■■ our bodies to the Shinju-sama.*

*"That seemed like, such a wonderful thing..." Apparently my parents cried.*

*"Wasshi....now you're ■■■■-san, huh. I'm glad that you didn't have it as bad as I did."*

*Hero's memoir 298.10.11*

---

Vertex, mankind's natural enemy had launched their attack. Shikoku had been transformed by the power of the Divine Tree. An egg-shaped faerie came out of the terminal and flew beside Sumi.

—This is my faerie... Support for us heroes.

—Yours is so round and cute, Wasshi~. Mine is~

Sonoko manipulated her terminal.

—Here it is. A crow~

—Sonocchi, please refer to it as what it is, a Crow Tengu...There's a big difference between one and a normal crow.

—Ah, is that so~? Let's do our best, Mr. Crow Tengu~

Looking at Sonoko's usual carefree attitude, Sumi noticed her tension had been lifted as well.

(Sonocchi... My dear friend. I will definitely protect you.) —Alrighty then, let's change~

—Understood, Sonocchi!

Sumi and Sonoko transformed into their hero forms in the midst of the forestized world. At the same time, Sumi's new weapon materialized. It was what's been known as a sniper rifle since the old era. This was the result of seeking a higher fire output than that of a bow. From the moment she was informed of the change, Sumi had been training with firearms so much that her

body got used to them. Its bullets were also especially made for Hero-use.

—Shirogane's so cool~

Sonoko had great expectations of the weapon named after her friend.

—You can rest assured that during battle, I won't let anything get close to you.

—Yep! Sniper Wasshi~ is so cool.

The two headed towards the bridge.

—Three Vertexes...

Sumi took a sniping stance and marked the enemies. The updated Hero system came with a radar, labeling enemies and allies. It was so they could tell if any were hiding.

A long and thin eel-shaped Vertex of the Aries constellation. A much larger Leo constellation Vertex. Big as a mountain. Even Sonoko, who didn't have a long-distance scope could clearly see it. The huge Vertex didn't move though. It imposingly stood still, just slightly past the wall. The last one was a Pisces Vertex. It was nowhere to be seen, but the radar indicated it was swimming around at high speed in the waters near the wall. It felt like it could get close in an instant, if you let your guard down.

Sumi braced herself.

(To think the Vertexes were being named after constellations...) In the oracle, they were portrayed as stars. It was contradictory, that a being born from the virus that plagued the Earth would take the image of a star. But Taisha only taught them how to fight, and never gave a conclusive answer when it came to deeper matters.

They must be hiding something.

(At any rate, defeating the enemy comes first now.)

Sumi cleared her mind and focused on sniping.

Aries was advancing alone, with eerie disturbing movements, towards the bridge. Sonoko took her spear in hand in preparation. Her weapon remained the same as before.

(Sonocchi took her stance. Initiating support fire.) Even with her rifle, The Leo Vertex by the wall was too far for Sumi to reach. She instead fired at the one approaching. Her shot accurately hit what appeared to be its brain, making it stagger and stopping its advance.

(I was able to stop its movement with a single hit... This really is a remarkable power up!) Sonoko charged at the immobilized enemy, and with her spear started hacking away at its joints with extreme precision, cutting them into pieces.

—Waa~ This has become so sharp~

Sonoko was surprised by her new power as well.

The scattered pieces of Aries started wriggling in a suspicious manner.

—Regeneration? Eh, no! This is~

A separate body started growing from each of the cut pieces. Aries' ability was multiplication. It was split into 6, so the number of enemies increased by 6.

—It gets healed and multiplies~ That's cheating~

Sonoko swung her spear, blocking the incoming attacks.

—Kuh...To think it was hiding such power...

Sumi resumed firing.

One of the split pieces violently tried to tackle Sonoko. At that moment her faerie appeared and blocked the attack. The shock pushed her back, but thanks to her faerie she took no damage.

—Waa~ This is the faerie barrier? It's amazing~ I felt nothing at all~

Sumi was also surprised by its capability. And at the same time, understood why the Hero system couldn't be mass produced. You can't make something this powerful so easily. That being said, in addition to consuming stamina, there was no way of knowing when an enemy attack capable of breaking through the

barrier might hit.

They were in no way invincible. They couldn't let their guard down.

Aries lunged at Sonoko all at once.

—That won't work anymore~!

Sumi shot them and Sonoko cut them down. But more enemies were born from the cut parts. Sumi's faerie, Aobouzu, pointed at her terminal. On the screen, only one target was marked as Aries.

—I see. There was still one main body, the rest were merely clones.

Sonoko noticed the same thing by fighting the enemy. She could clearly sense from their movements that only one boss existed. But that one body was heavily protected by the clones, so she couldn't get to it easily. It was frustrating, but at that moment a bullet went through the clones and hit the main body.

—As expected of Wasshi~. You understood before I even said anything~

Sonoko said as she swung her spear. Having its trick revealed, and in face of the two's attacks the Aries Vertex was being pushed back towards the wall.

—Alright~. That's one down.

While fighting the enemy, the flower petal seal carved on Sumi's body had filled completely. By using their hero powers, that petal seal, aka "Mankai Gauge" would fill up. When it's on max, they can use Mankai to level up and increase their power. Sonoko's gauge was almost filled too.

(With this we can use Mankai, our trump card)

Up until this point, everything was going as planned. Two enemies remained.

At that moment, the Leo giant started advancing. As if it had been observing their fight against Aries. Leo's movements were a bit strange. It did not move on the bridge but instead followed it along as it flew atop the water. The radar also showed Pisces charging straight at Sonoko underwater.

Sonoko averted her attention towards the sea.

Pisces emerged with a rumble. Sumi fired at the flying behemoth. Sonoko



lunged at Pisces as well. The enemy was easily staggered by Sumi's precise shooting. The other one was cut in half and fell back into the water.

The heroes' focus switched to Pisces and at that moment, Leo fired a gigantic laser beam.

—!?

The attack wasn't meant for Sumi, but the glowing target in the distance. The Divine Tree.

—Wha...?!!

Sumi was terrified when she realized that fact. However, the beam dissipated before reaching the tree. It was still too far away. Leo advanced further in an attempt to close the distance. That one just now must have been a test shot. The next attack will most likely destroy the tree, after minor adjustments. Such firepower has to be stopped at all costs.

—Time to use that! Mankai!!

Sumi released its power.

A flower bloomed over the great Seto bridge.

—Waa~, Giant Battleship Wasshi~!

Sumi's Mankai had a large number of giant mounted canons. It was focused on firepower output. As Sonoko mentioned, it had the ability to fly. Sumi floated towards Leo and unleashed hellfire upon it.

—Incredible... This is Mankai~

With a power able to flatten a mountain. The giant Vertex, unable to withstand it, collapsed into the depths of the sea.

Sumi landed near Sonoko on the bridge.

—The two of them both sank into the sea...

—I wonder if they'll just turn tail and leave now~

Looking over at the radar. It still showed the enemy markers. They'll probably resurface once they finish regenerating. Sumi's Mankai was released. In a shower of petals, she returned to her usual form.

—Looks like we can't stay in Mankai for too long.

—You were amazing though~. I'm gonna need an autograph later.

—You should try using it too...?!

Sumi suddenly collapsed on her knees.

—W... What's wrong, Wasshi~?

—...? I can't.... I can't move my legs.

—Eh? Why is that~? Were you hit?

—! The Vertex are moving again!

The beasts, having finished regenerating, started moving again. Leo resurfaced and advanced towards the tree.

—This time it's my turn to use Mankai~. I'm leaving my back to you Wasshi~

—Yes, I can still fire my rifle even in my current state.

Sonoko cut down the Pisces Vertex right as it came out of the water.

—It's filled! Mankai~

Once again, a large flower blossomed over the Seto Great Bridge.

—Wa~. My spear feels so much stronger!

The number of floating blades on the spear's tip increased.

—Ooo~ Look at this, I can easily manipulate each one of the blades too~

Opposite to Sumi's raw power up, it was a better fit for the swift and agile Sonoko.





—Alrighty~. Time to take down the big one!

—I got you covered.

Leo had no chance to fire its beam, thanks to Sonoko's flurry of attack and Sumi's support fire. Sumi's Mankai gauge was being filled again.

(While one of us is in Mankai, the other can restore their gauge. This way there will constantly be one of us in Mankai, assuring our dominance!) Sumi quickly grasped the way to use Mankai.

Leo was certainly huge and powerful, but this guaranteed their victory. Sonoko's attacks sunk the Vertex into the sea once more.

—Should I follow it down~?

—No, the other one is there too... If it is as its name suggests then it must be really strong underwater. It's too dangerous.

The enemies were cooperating as well. Leo might have taken this approach for that same reason too; to be able to retreat and regenerate. Not even the faeries could protect the heroes if they let their guard down. Sonoko's Mankai released.

—Alright~ I hope they've learned their lesson.

—They're still not moving, according to the radar. How persistent...

—Hmm... The radar..... Huh....?

Sonoko started rubbing her eyes.

—What's wrong?

—I can't see... From one of my eyes~

—Eh?

Sumi was startled. She still couldn't move her legs.

—Could it be... an enemy ability? By taking damage it cast some kind of curse on us?

—But we have the power of the Shinju-sama on our side, would something like that really work? Also the faeries should be able to protect us~

—Why then....

Sumi turned over and looked at the Divine Tree. It was brightly shining, like always.

(If it's not an enemy attack, then~...)

Once again, Pisces and Leo started moving. Taking advantage of the girls' exhaustion, they planned to take the fight over the sea if they tried chasing them down.

—I'll take the Leo! Mankai!!

—Ah! Wasshi~!

Sumi had already transformed.

—What's wrong?

—No, it's nothing. I'll fill up my gauge on the Pisces~

Even with her legs unable to move, Sumi was able to fly her warship. She went after the colossus again.

—This time I won't hold back. I will completely destroy it!

The Vertex fired a beam of light.

—Too weak!

Firepower versus firepower. Sumi's shots completely eradicated the enemy's. She couldn't possibly lose after Mankai.

—I will defeat it before it shoots at the Shinju-sama!! OOOOOOOOOOOO!!!!

Sumi let out a war cry, and focused all her power on shooting down the Vertex. Once again, the giant's body tilted down.

—I can't stop attacking here. I'll obliterate it before it runs to the depths!!

The Leo appeared to be some sort of Supreme commander to the other Vertex. It clearly had a completely different feel than the rest. And also seemed to give instructions to the other two. The battle would end the moment this one goes down, Sumi thought with confidence. She mustered her strength as she continued firing. The majestic figure was being torn to shreds.

—One... more push....

Sumi's Mankai reached its limit. The petals started falling. It was the Sange. [\[9\]](#)

—Just... One more attack...!!

Sumi got even closer to the Leo. At that moment, she saw something resembling a burning sun.

—That's... the core... Its vital spot!!

The instant she prepared to launch her final attack, the core mysteriously gleamed and attacked Sumi.

—....?!!

Sumi was blown away, in her surprise. Leo's body sank into the sea a third time.

—Wasshi~!!

Sonoko rushed over to Sumi, lying on the bridge. She lost consciousness due to the impact, but the faerie had completely blocked the attack. Sumi herself was unharmed. Sonoko sighed in relief.

At that moment, the ground shook.

—An earthquake...? No, This is~....!

Pisces was ramming the bridge's foundations underwater. Vertex were known for only attacking humans. In order to get to the girls, it did something unexpected. This was a first.

—The Seto Bridge... is collapsing?

Sonoko carried Sumi in her arms, and jumped to land. She put her down, without trying to wake her up. She, who proved to be extremely bright when it counts, saw through everything. Mankai, and the cost that comes with it. The ugly part of the Hero system. Knowing that, there was no more reason to wake Sumi up. It should be enough, with her alone using Mankai.

Leo and Pisces resurfaced again. It was clear they were playing an attrition war. Except, Leo didn't feel as threatening as before.

—Wasshi~ wore it down pretty well. Thanks to her efforts I will do just fine by

myself now~

Sonoko felt proud. She shouted.

—MANKAI!!

The large flower bloomed.

To protect her friend, and everyone else. Infinite power flowed through her.

—Guts!! That's what being a hero's all about. Isn't that right, Mino-san~!

And then she charged at the Vertex.

\*\*\*

That day, a big cataclysm befell Shikoku. Two perished, twelve were injured. Any damage caused during forestization reflected on the real world. The victims were a couple that worked for Taisha. They managed to evacuate the citizens, but they themselves couldn't get to safety in time and died. It was also reported that the Seto Great Bridge was destroyed beyond repair during the disaster.

By the time their homeroom teacher made it there, the two girls were being transported. Sonoko was completely unconscious.

—The Hero Nogi used Mankai for an unknown number of times, but from her state it appears to have been more than 10... We believe she might never walk again.

—It was not in vain. She managed to drive the enemy away. Carry her with care.

Sonoko was taken by men from Taisha. Her teacher saw her off with mixed feelings. Right about then.

—Uu..... ah.

—Washio-san?!

Washio Sumi opened her eyes.

—You're awake. Can you hear me? See me? Washio-san?

—.....

—... What's wrong?

—.... I... I am.... eh, huh?!

—Washio-san?!

\*\*\*

After further discussion at Taisha HQ, and according to the oracle, it was concluded that Vertex won't be coming back for a while. Still, be it one year or two years later, these monsters will definitely come back and attack the Divine Tree. Countermeasures had to be put in place before then. A way to actually defeat them, and not simply drive them away. It is at times like this that mankind evolves rapidly.

Taisha came up with a possibility to destroy Vertex, from the girls' battle records. The core of the Leo that Sumi gouged out. Taisha referred to that as a "soul". They understood that the Vertex were built around that soul. It simply needed to be pulled out and destroyed somehow. That should prevent their regeneration. The updated Hero system with faeries and Mankai was capable of doing so, based on the last battle. Though it might still require some fine-tuning.

Another problem was the low number of heroes. According to a Taisha operative, there were no more children with enough aptitude. As a last resort, they will have the tree pick heroes from the entire country. It will not be disclosed, obviously. Revealing the existence of Vertex would throw the world into panic. The people living peacefully under the Divine Tree's protection did not need to know the cruel truth of the world.

A Shikoku nationwide examination was used to choose the girls with the highest aptitude to become Heroes. Members of Taisha were dispatched, to assist them in case of emergency. If a Vertex were to appear, they would become heroes and fight them. The difference between the new and old heroes, is that they weren't trained for battle. Thanks to the faeries' barrier, even normal girls could fight. The problem was that because that barrier was so strong, the Hero system couldn't be mass produced. Even if they could gather dozens of recruits, only five of them would actually be able to fight.

\*\*\*

A number of girls with hero aptitude were located during the nationwide examination. As per their policy, Taisha decided the following. Washio Sumi was to be moved and stationed near the candidate with the highest aptitude. That individual had the highest chance of being picked by the tree. The Inubouzaki girl, who also had a high aptitude, was to be sent near that cadet as well. She could both support the other candidates, as well as fight as a hero herself.

The terminal used by Minowa Gin was recycled for further use. Out of the new girls, a compatible one would be chosen to inherit and use it. That Hero was to train every day until the reappearance of the Vertex. She would receive her final instructions and be dispatched as reinforcements or as an overseer.

Lastly, concerning the two other heroes.

Nogi Sonoko, having gone through Mankai and Sange multiple times, was no longer able to lead a normal life. Taisha took her in their care as a trump card.

Washio Sumi had lost the use of her legs, and many years of her memories. As her case wasn't as severe as Nogi Sonoko's, she was to be made to fight if Vertex showed up again. As all her memories as a Washio had vanished, she took her old name back.

Up to now, Heroes were chosen from inside Taisha. Their families were given great importance and status. But now that they were picked from the entire nation, that was no longer the case. She herself was told and convinced she lost her memories in an accident.

Taisha had great expectations of the girl formerly known as Washio Sumi. Even after losing her memories, her body should still remember how to fight. She gained two new faeries as well. A Hero that goes through Sange loses their bodily functions, but as a compensation gains more faeries and weapons. That tremendous power will definitely be useful to the new Heroes.

The curtain closes on the series of Vertex attacks that threw the lives of three girls into chaos. The heroes' fight has still not ended. In return for the supernatural powers they were given, their bodily functions were offered as an offering. The parents cried for their children when they heard the truth.

They had to accept the facts. Being chosen by the Divine Tree was a great honor. If they refused to, the tree would be destroyed by the Vertex, and

mankind would meet its doom.

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*Era of the Gods, Year 299 - Spring.*

*The girl formerly known as Washio Sumi was living in a wheelchair. Starting today, her life in this new town would begin.*

*Both her legs, and her memories. Her heart filled with anxiety and sadness.*

*That's when she heard a merry voice.*

*—You're my new neighbor!*

*A friendly girl approached her smiling.*

*—I was so excited when I heard a girl the same age as me was moving in!*

*She extended her hand.*

*—We're the same age, so we'll end up at the same middle school. I'm Yuuki Yuuna, nice to meet you!*

*She said with a bright smile.*

*—Oh. You must not be familiar with the area. In that case I'll show you around. Leave it to me!!*

*That smile was so warm, it caused her expression to loosen up as well.*

*—What's your name?*

*The girl formerly known as Washio Sumi replied with her birth name.*

*—I am... Tougou Mimori.*





*(Chapter 8: End)*

# Uncensored Hero's Memoir Entry

**Editor note:** There will be spoiler for the anime and the obviously LN itself. So if you haven't watched the anime, i suggest you to watch it now and return to this entry after you do it.

Translation is taken from ckwng's [reddit thread](#).

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# Chapter 1 entry

*When I heard that we were chosen by the Shinju-sama, I thought that was an amazing thing, but exactly how it was amazing, I didn't really realize.*

*Just that, once I heard that the enemies that were coming would destroy the world, I thought, I must fight.*

*In the beginning, I lost myself in that feeling.*

*At that time, that I would end up turning my body into offerings to keep fighting on, it never even occurred to me in my dreams.*

*Hero's memoir 298.4.25*

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## Chapter 2 entry

*When I first saw Minowa Gin, I had the feeling that I would have trouble dealing with her.*

*She was loud, strong-willed, overpowering.*

*But as we felt each other out I thought she was a really nice girl.*

*That she would be **ruined**, and **lost her life** was.....*

*Hero's memoir 298.5.15*

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## Chapter 3 entry

*1 + 1 + 1 does not equal 3, but becomes 10.*

*If it was us, we thought we could do it. We had to think that way.*

*The enemies are called Vertexes. Abominations born from the center of viruses.*

*We are to repel them.*

*But, to such existences, to give them the name Vertexes...a word meaning the highest point, why...?*

*At that time, the fact that Vertexes were things **constructed** by **Gods** was something we still did not know.*

*Hero's memoir 298.6.20*

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## Chapter 4 entry

***Several hundred** years ago, according to documents of the **Anno Domini** [\[10\]](#) era, friends that you want to stay with forever are called BFF.*

*It's an interesting word somehow, and I liked it. Us three are BFF.*

*Even now, I feel them close to me.*

*Hero's memoir 298.7.10*

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## Chapter 5 entry

*The Shinju-sama is God itself. Therefore, I prayed.*

*That I didn't want to be separated from my friends.*

*That was, in a way, something that would continue to be granted to me.*

*In exchange for the sacrifice of a comrade, we gained **undying bodies**.*

*Hero's memoir 298.7.12*

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## Chapter 6 entry

*I received a lot of gifts sent from the Taisha. My family also gained more power in the Taisha it seems.*

*This special treatment surprised me then. But, after looking into it, it wasn't anything special.*

*In any era, **human sacrifices** receive kindnesses.*

*Hero's memoir 298.8.12*

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## Chapter 7 entry

*It was after I **found out** the **truth** that I learned.*

*That in the past, it wasn't **viruses** that inflicted pain onto **humanity**, but  
**Vertexes**.*

*And that the cause for that was **humanity** from the start.*

*It's a bit similar to the story of **Tower** of **Babel**, I thought.*

*Hero's memoir 298.9.211*

---

## Chapter 8 entry

*The act of fighting while **offering** our bodies to the Shinju-sama.*

*"That seemed like, such a wonderful thing..." Apparently my parents cried.*

*"Wasshi....now you're **Tougou**-san, huh. I'm glad that you didn't have it as bad as I did."*

*Hero's memoir 298.10.11*

---

# Extra Chapter







**Note:** This chapter will spoil the events unfold on final section of the anime. So it is recommended to finish the anime first before reading this chapter.

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—And then, something like this~!

Gin princess carried Sumi firmly.

—Ahh, just like that~ Alright~ Ideas are rising up like a fountain~

Sonoko repeatedly nodded.

—Then, can we stop now, Sonoko?

—No no, a little longer~

—But this pose is embarrassing, Sonocchi.

Sumi, who was being carried, muttered.

—And I'm getting tired. Even for the well trained hero, Gin-sama, it's tough to keep carrying someone for such a long time.

—Cough. We-well, it helps that I'm not that heavy, isn't it?

—Nah, I dunno. Aren't those big fruits on your body heavy?

—"Fruits", that joke again...

—Okay okay~ You two, stop that dream crushing exchange~ Stay romantic~

Sonoko warned Gin and Sumi.

—Why did it turn out like this?

—Isn't it all because of what you said, Gin? Seriously...

In order to fight against Vertexes, the heroes kept training day after day, but sometimes, they also had days off. This time, in one of those breaks, Sumi and Gin went to Sonoko's house to play. There, they learned a shocking truth.

—Eh? Sonocchi, you uploaded the novel you're writing onto the internet?

—Ehehe, that's right~ Only the part I have confidence in, though~

—You sure have courage... Now that I think about it, of course you do

because you're a hero.

Gin suddenly admired her.

—My novel is on this site~ See, this is me~

—Let me see... eh? Ehh? What with this big number of visitors!? Just how many people are reading your novel, Sonoko?

Gin rubbed her eyes.

—Furthermore, its rating is also so high! It got 5 stars.

—I mean, it's even on top of the popular novels ranking right now.

—Well, it's just "top" of this site, though~

—But lots of people visit this site in the first place... Way to go, leader! Our literary master!

—Sonocchi did say she wanted to try writing a novel the other day, but I'm surprised that she could produce such results so soon...

—But I'm in trouble now~ I want your help.

—Alright, just ask! Gin-sama's got your back.

—So what is it, Sonocchi?

The two leaned in, waiting for Sonoko's question.

—Um~ I'm really, really happy that everyone's enjoying my novel, but as more and more people read it, the bar's also rising up~

—Isn't that a good thing?

—Not really~ It's like, I feel slightly pressured when writing now~

—Hey, hey, when did you start savoring the anguish of popularity?

—You really can't be made light of, Sonocchi... I want to do something for you but this is hard.

—I can't write things like articles... But still, if there's anything you want us to do, Sonoko, we'll do it.

—Really? You really will do anything?

As Sonoko got fired up, Gin got a bad feeling.

—Ah, no, guess I should stop after all...

—Well then, well then~

It was too late, Sonoko didn't listen anymore.

And so, the present princess carry came to happen.

—I originally modeled the characters after you two, so now that I got you two making poses like in my imagination, my creativity is steadily rising up~

—I'm glad to be of help to you...

—So what should we do next, Sonoko? Should I just go ahead and kiss Sumi?

—Wh-what are you saying? Kissing?!

—I-it's a joke, stop acting all shy! You're making me feel embarrassed!

—It's a joke~ You're making me feel embarrassed~ okay... Yay~ I got these really great lines~

—Don't just write them down like that! I'm gonna charge you!!

Thanks to those two's devotion, Sonoko recovered from her slump. Afterwards, her novel kept gaining more and more popularity.

One day, while the three were about to go home after school. A certain change occurred in Sonoko's shoe rack.

A letter was found there.

—Hm? For some reason, there's a letter inside~

—! Perhaps, it's a challenge letter from the Vertexes, just kidding.

Gin, who was full of vigor, mistook it for a challenge one.

—This is, perhaps, one of those so called "letters of misfortune". A curse that spread once in the A.D era. If you don't send the same thing to 5 people, misfortune will befall you...



Sumi, who loved ghost stories, mistook it for a cursed letter.

—Hmm, I wonder what it is~



It was so like Sonoko, to be daring enough to open letters in front of other people. Sonoko unfolded the letter and read the content out loud.

—... Recently, before I knew it, I've always been looking at you.

—It really is a challenge! Where's the location?

—It's a curse! We need to get some salt for purification.

Ignoring her two excited friends, Sonoko continued to read the letter.

—... I think I want to get closer to you.

—Whaat!?

At this point, strangely, Gin realized what was really going on.

—This sentence sounds even more dreadful than a simple curse.

Sumi was still mistaking it for a cursed letter.

—You might already have enough trouble with your duty, but because of that, I want to support you~ so they said.

—D, d-d-d-don't tell me it's "that", Sumi?

—... Yeah, seems like it's not a curse.

—You still haven't realized? It's "that", that one which begins with a "Ra".

—Arhat (rakan) statue?

—Wrong! This is a Rabu Retaa!

—Ahh, I see... Ra!!? Rabububu!?

—You finally get it, and calm down already, Sumi.

—Waa, so I got a love letter~

—Strategy meeting!!

At Gin's word, the three moved to Ines' food court like always.

—Well then, what'll you do, Sonoko?

—Even if you ask me, I don't even know what kind of person this is from~

—But how come you are acting so calm? You just received a love letter, Sonocchi.

—That's an experience we've never had, right, Sumi?

—Yeah, I did receive some letters before, but they were all bad-mouthing stuff like "Washio-san is such a fault-finder", "Washio-san gets mad too easily", *etc.*

—Ahaha! Wait, we should focus on Sonoko now.

—Maybe you should write them a reply first?

—S-somehow, I'm the one who received the letter but you two are even more into it than me~ For now, I'll try meeting them~

—Me-meet them!? You sure are bold!

—Way to go, Sonocchi... Somehow, I'm starting to like this line.

—After all, this is from a girl, you know? If you look at these characters, you'll know right away~

—Eh!?

—From a girl, you say...

Now that they looked at it, both the envelope and characters were oozing with girliness. Because they were whirled up by the word "love letter", the two didn't notice that.

—Oh, so that how it is, I was so surprised.

—So the other party is a girl, huh? ... Gin seems quite popular.

—I think you also got your share of admirers, Sumi.

—But Sonoko is the one that actually got a love letter, huh?

—Well, Sonocchi is charming.

—But even if it was a boy, I wouldn't go out with them~ Because I've got Mino-san and Wasshi supporting me already.

—Sonocchi... such lovable words.

—You don't have to tear up over them, though...

In the end, while the fact that the three were busy with their duties became well-known, there was no story about their love lives.

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—... Something like that did happen before~

Era of the Gods, year 300.

Inside her hospital room, Sonoko looked back at the memories she shared with Minowa Gin and Washio Sumi. Just then, she'd had the opportunity to talk a lot with that Sumi. And so, she unintentionally recalled the past.

At the Seto Ohashi Bridge Ruins, against two Vertexes, Leo and Pisces, Sonoko had repeatedly gone Mankai to confront them. After offering various bodily functions to the Shinju as payment, she had ended up bedridden. Since her mouth was still working, day after day, she asked people to write and add up new entries in her diary. Even though it would probably be censored, for Sonoko, who loved to write novels, that diary helped distract her a little.

One day, Sonoko learned about the current activities of Washio Sumi, who had returned to using her old name. Sonoko wanted to meet Sumi, but Taisha refused to let them meet no matter what. Because of that, Sonoko used her own power to draw Sumi to her. Then, she told her about Mankai's after-effect, and just now, about the truth of the world... about what was happening outside the wall.

It wasn't a virus that brought the end to the Christian Era, but the Vertexes sent in from the sky by God to purge humanity. The world outside Shikoku had completely turned into a dead land hatching infinite Vertexes. A fight to drive away Vertexes is more like a ritual. A ritual where young girls are chosen to be human sacrifices for driving monsters away. That way, at least, the peace of the world within the Shinju's barrier is maintained.

In their time, they had lost too many things because they weren't told anything about the truth. No matter how cruel that truth was, Sonoko thought it had to be conveyed clearly. She didn't know what kind of action Sumi would finally take after knowing that. Sure enough, the Taisha's people changed their



looks and came running in.

—Sonoko-sama, the current Hero, Inubouzaki Fuu ,has gone out of control... Furthermore, you may already know but Tougou Mimori is also making suspicious movements... We would like you to lend us your power.

The Taisha's people knelt down to Sonoko. They returned the terminal to Sonoko. Considering Tougou Mimori's power with her 3 faeries, it's easy to imagine how powerful Nogi Sonoko, who possessed 21 faeries, would be after transforming into a Hero.

—So I just need to transform and stop Inubouzaki Fuu-san's rampage, right~?

—Please do so, Sonoko-sama.

If one came to know that they themselves were a human sacrifice, they might be stripped off their fangs by Taisha. Sonoko's current duty was to protect Taisha from out of control Heroes.

However, Sonoko...

—Maybe I'll just wait and see~

... refused to transform into Hero.

—Sonoko-sama, if the Heroes go on a rampage now and Taisha is endangered then the Shinju-sama... the world will also be endangered.

—You're right~ It's a big crisis~

—If the world is destroyed then what did Minowa-sama risk her life and die for?

This was how Taisha tried to compel Sonoko. Normally, no matter how much they said it was to protect the world, there was no need for her to listen to the excuses of the adults that had tricked and used her. But now that they had mentioned Gin's name, it would be hard.

"If you go against the order, Gin's death will be rendered meaningless". They were threatening her in a roundabout way.

Sonoko answered.

—If we all die then I'll say "sorry", I'll apologize a lot to her in the other side~

—Eh?

Against her unexpected answer, the Taisha's people uttered dumbly.

—Right now, I want to prioritize the alive Wasshi's feelings~

—So, Sonoko-sama...

—What the Heroes will do once they know everything... I want to let the Heroes do what they want to do... And it's not just because I understand their feelings~

—But then, in the worst case scenario, the world will...

—So... What? Are you telling me to become a Hero and fight against Wasshi and that friend...?

Sonoko shot back with a serious face.

—Bullshit.

At that moment, the once calm and gentle girl's anger manifested clearly.

—Sonoko-sama!!

—Sonoko-sama!!!!

It was their price for hiding the truth from the girls. The Taisha's people kept requesting Sonoko earnestly. However, Sonoko never transformed. Returning to a calm expression, like always, she gazed up at the sky and observed the clouds.

—... So that's what I told those guys~

—I expected no less.

The usual exchange unfolded between the two.

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*(Extra chapter: End)*

# Epilogue: Sonoko After



おまけエピソード  
「その後の園子」

結城友奈は  
勇者である

作/タカヒロ  
イラスト/BUNBUN

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**Note:** This epilogue chronologically happened AFTER the anime. So if you haven't watched it, go do yourself a favor and watch it right now.

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—The people from Taisha weren't happy about it, but I told them I would never fight Wasshi~ and her friends~

—I expected no less.

Gazing at the sea, Sonoko and Tougou were having a chat. Next to them was Yuuna in a wheelchair. Some time had passed since the incident and their offerings were slowly being returned. Sonoko was going through rehab, just like the Hero club.

—Tougou-san, I'm glad your memories have returned.

—Yeah. There are still some hazy parts though...

The offerings were returned, but the recovery was different for each individual. Yuuna's case was especially severe, for a while.

—But I've remembered the really important stuff. Sonocchi and... Gin.

The Shinju may be able to give back offerings, but returning a lost life was impossible. 2 years ago, Minowa Gin is the hero that fought to save the world from extinction. The couple that evacuated civilians and was late to escape the cataclysm. The Inubouzaki sisters' parents. The lost lives were way too heavy.

—Say... have you heard any details from Taisha, Sonocchi?

—A little, but we'll talk about that later~. It's not bad news, so for now let's focus on rehab~

—... I understand, Sonocchi.

—Make sure you keep your ribbon on~. Even if your memories as a Washio have returned, you're still Tougou Mimori~. It looks good on you.

—Yup.

—I wonder how I should call Wasshi~ from now on though~. How about Mimorin?

—No need to force yourself and change it. Wasshi~'s just fine.

—Then I'll keep using that for now. I'm so happy Wasshi~'s finally back~

—Sorry for making you wait.

—...

—What's wrong, Yuuna-chan?

—T...Tougou-san, you seem so much more mature when speaking with Nogi-san.

—I...Is that so?

—Fufu~, this is her Wasshi~ mode. It's a bit different from Tougou-san mode~

—Ahaha, it's pretty tricky.

—You're the reason I became like this, Yuuna-chan...

The three heroes smiled as the sea breeze blew. In front of their eyes, the gigantic wall was still standing. When they defeated the gigantic and all-powerful Leo, the Vertex invasions abruptly stopped. In the meantime, the Shinju and Taisha worked to repair the wall.

A prophecy had confirmed that there would be no more attacks for a while. Be it a year, or two, no one knew how long this period of peace would last. One thing was for sure, the Vertex will definitely be back. As they regenerated. Again and again.

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Several weeks later.

The Hero club's cultural festival skit received critical acclaim.

Tougou, Fuu, Itsuki, Karin. All were still struggling with their Sange aftereffects, but they were promised complete recovery as long as they continued their rehab. Only Yuuna's recovery was slow, and thus, she was often away for examination.

And eventually. Yuuna and Tougou walked to school together. Yuuna made it her goal to be able to get to school on her own feet, and worked hard on rehab.

The two of them left their homes early, and casually headed to school.

—Yuuna-chan, how are you feeling?

—I still get dizzy once in a while, but I'm perfectly fine!

—Make sure to let me know if something happens. When in trouble, talk to someone.

—Yep, same goes for you too, Tougou-san, when in trouble, talk to someone.

—... Yes.

Tougou replied in a formal manner.



Suddenly, a car stopped in front of the two. A black limousine.

—Heya~ you two~

That slow-paced voice was familiar. Out of the car came Nogi Sonoko, wearing a Sanshoo Middle School uniform.

—We're classmates from today onwards~, I'll be in your care~

Sonoko twirled around once.

—... Eh?

The two were in complete awe, as this was news to them.

—You look totally shocked~ The surprise was a success~

Sonoko laughed with an innocent smile.

Familiar faces had gathered in the club room. And then...

—Nogi Sonoko, the new applicant for the Hero Club~

A new hero had joined. Her name was added to the member list on the blackboard.

—My rehab has reached the stage where I can attend class. The obvious choice was Sanshoo Middle School~

—I never imagined we'd be able to study together again, Sonocchi.

—Help me out if I fall asleep in class~

—Make sure you don't in the first place.

—T-Tougou is being even more severe than usual.

Fuu was bewildered.

—I know, right? But that side of her is wonderful as well!

—Oh, Yuuna-chan...

Witnessing Tougou's embarrassment, Sonoko...

(I suddenly feel the urge to write something~)

Grinned at herself.

—Welcome aboard, Nogi-san.

—Just Sonoko is fine~, Prez~

—Ooh, calling me that already. Unlike a certain someone.

—And that certain someone is me?

—Miyoshi-san, I've met your brother a number of times.

Karin's brother worked at Taisha.

—... Eh... Ah, my brother has been in your care.

—No need to be so formal, we're classmates now~. I'll call you Nibosshi~ too.

— Who?! Who told you about that?!!

—It's gotta be Tougou.

—... She definitely reminds you of Mino-san.

— I heard that even when she went through Sange she was still more concerned about me than about herself. That's another thing that's similar about them.

Miyoshi Karin's terminal originally belonged to the hero that fought alongside Tougou and Nogi, Minowa Gin. They had similar dispositions, which is why it was passed down to Karin.

—I-I'm Inubouzaki Itsuki. P-p-leased to meet you.

—I...Itsuki greeted her on her own... Did you just see that?!

—Yes, yes, you don't need to make a fuss about it, Fuu. You're being rude to Itsuki.

—So, this is how little sisters grow...

Ignoring her sister, Itsuki was having a chat with Sonoko.

—Nice to meet you. I'm Nogi Sonoko, Ittsun~

—I...Ittsun?!

—Sonocchi gives everyone weird nicknames.



—Yuuna-chan is... Yu~yu.

—Ah, I love it! Then you're Sono-chan.

—Ooh~ I'll take that~

—Alright!

The two shook hands firmly.

—Yuuna-san and Sonoko-san get along so well.

—Still, will you be able to keep up, Nogi? You've been away from school for a long time.

—It'll only take a few weeks to get back on track. I'll be fine, Prez~

—Y-You CAN get back? That's pretty amazing.

—She definitely can, knowing her. Isn't that right, Sonocchi?

—....

—Nogi? What's wrong?

—....

—No... Nogi?

—It's okay, Fuu-senpai. She's just spacing out. Sonocchi, Sonocchi.

—Aah~ Wasshi~. I was just thinking about something~

Sonoko laughed.

—I sense something amazing from this one... As expected of a first generation hero.

—I'm only a new a member here, so I'll do my best~. Hey hey hurray~

—Ask me about anything, Sono-chan.

—Yu~Yu~

—Sono-chan~

Yuuna and Sonoko both joined their hands and started dancing.





—This new kid is something else.

Fuu said with a bitter smile.

—Hmm...

—? What's wrong, Karin-chan?

—N...nothing. Nothing at all, Yuuna.

—Alright! We'll be holding the welcoming party at "Kameya" today!

—Udon, right Prez~?

—The people from the shop will be happy to know we have a new member.

—Yay~ It's Udon~

Nogi Sonoko was an Udon lover as well.

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After the party, Sonoko went over to Tougou's house. Yuuna was probably being considerate. Today, she left them alone. The two had a lot to talk about.

About everything that'd happened so far.

About their dear friend.

And...

—Have you heard the reason everyone's getting their offerings back, Sonocchi?

The other side of the incident.

Sonoko smiled.

—As I suspected, Sonocchi. You seem to know something.

—I know my fair share of things~, I wasn't being worshiped just for show you know~

—Will you tell me about it? I haven't had contact with Taisha at all. Even after all I did...

—I was waiting for a chance to talk about it, with all the club members gathered. But if you wanna know, then I'll just tell you now, Wasshi~

—Please do.

—The Shinju-sama... came to believe in human courage~

—? Sonocchi, could you make it easier to understand?

—... If you had continued fighting the Vertex, what do you think would have happened?

—It would have been a living hell for us, but the world would have been safe... I think. However, with the outside in that state, eventually...

—Yep~. It's clear once you see what's outside that wall, right? Us heroes would sacrifice ourselves fighting the Vertex, but one day we'd be overwhelmed and the Shinju-sama would get destroyed.

—The hard truth about siege warfare...

—However, the Shinju-sama came to believe in the courage of mankind. By witnessing Yu~yu's and everyone's hard work, as well as getting plenty of Vertex combat data, the Hero system has been updated to the next stage.

—Updated... to the next stage?

— Once Taisha is done with the preparations, they will make a big announcement.

—... You don't mean...!!!

—Yep, the truth behind the wall will be made public to the rest of mankind. The fact that what tormented everyone back in the old Era was not a deadly Virus. And the truth about the Battle of the Seto Grand Bridge as well. It'll feel embarrassing, being talked about like some sort of legend~

—But that'll cause major chaos! Even I fell into despair after seeing what was beyond the wall.

—But if they explain how to deal with it, it'll be different~

—What do you mean?

—The introduction of the advanced Hero system. They say as long as we have this it will be okay. Apparently, the next update will be mass-production.

—What about Sange?

— Gone. The fact that it can be mass-produced means that an invincible barrier is no longer feasible. Sacrifices will no longer be required, but in return the heroes will be weaker than before. However, everyone will be able to fight~. I think that any young girl will be able to transform, as long as they remain pure. That's just me speculating, though. I don't know exactly what kind of system they'll be implementing after all~

—But with the outside in that state, how...?

—I'm not sure about the details, but they apparently found a solution to that as well. It will be announced at the same time. Something about seeds or whatever...

—...

—I wonder how the Gods of the Heavens will react to that... There are still plenty of things we don't know about the Vertex~

—How about this way of looking at things?

—?

—I think mass-production was their answer, after they came to the realization that a small group of children wielding that much power was too dangerous. Between the six of us, Fuu-senpai almost went to attack Taisha and I tried to lead the enemy to destroy the Shinju-sama, putting the whole world at risk.

—And I just sat there observing the situation~, completely neglecting my duties.

—After half of the group rebelled, it was only natural they would try to change the system... and as a result, civilians are being dragged into the fight.

Tougou murmured to herself.

— You say they're getting dragged in, but it's just as you said before, at the rate things were going, in the end everyone would be doomed~

Sonoko let out a bitter smile.

—Don't think negatively about the situation. The Shinju-sama believed mankind would be able to walk down the harsh path, instead of a gentle one that leads to its demise. That is why it gave back our offerings and allowed for

mass-production of the system so that everyone would be able to stand and fight. Everyone will don their own flower~. Isn't that a good thing?

—I understand why the offerings have been returned.

—Even with them returned, recovery is not the same for everybody, right? I am able to walk again, but some things are still pretty tough~

—My ear and memories are still far from perfect, too...

—And then you look at Yu~yu who didn't even know if she would get better, being all cheerful. She's amazing. From what I've heard, she forcefully went into Mankai and charged at the center of the enemy's body, then touched its core with her bare hand. I thought that maybe a bug occurred in the system, or her consciousness had been taken away by the Vertex~. When it comes to Vertexes, not even the Shinju-sama's power would be of any use...

—Or perhaps it was both. At any rate, she was in a really bad state. But she still managed to come back to us with sheer willpower, after hearing our voices. Heroes are all about guts.

—Yup, yup...

—At first, I thought Yuuna-chan had shouldered everyone's offerings...

—If that were the case, Yu~yu would really have been unable to come back~. That would make Wasshi~ and everyone sad. I think a Hero is someone who gives courage to other people~. Making even a God think humans got some backbone, she really is amazing~

—... The real fight starts now. We might be picked to fight again. Especially me, since I wasn't blamed for my actions.

—Wasshi~ can be both a Hero and a Miko. You can hear the Shinju-sama's voice and use its power as well. I hear such people are called "Messiah".

—A Messiah... is... that. I need to strengthen my heart.

—Now now, don't take it all upon yourself~

—I...I know. But the way you said it just, you know, led me to think that way.

—Ehh~ It's my fault~?

Before anyone could notice, the mood turned harmonious once again.

In this world that will eventually end, the truth was to be announced. This country is in great danger. Realizing the facts, everyone will have to work together in order to survive. Rather than keeping it a secret and waiting for the end, mankind had to do everything in its power. That's how strong humans are. The ones who showed everyone that possibility were Yuuki Yuuna and her friends.

—And that's all I heard from Taisha.

—Thank you, Sonocchi...

(... But every time I look at Yu~yu, I feel a bit strange. I wonder what that is. It feels like something's not right~)

At the Inubouzaki house, Fuu stood in the middle of the living room.

—What's wrong, Onee-chan?

—Hmm, I wonder if we'll still be needing this plate.

The plate where Fuu served Inugami dogfood.

—But I can't bring myself to throw it away... Being made into sacrifices and all was no joking matter, but the faeries still protected us.

—You really got along well with Inugami, Onee-chan. You two probably made the best pair.

—That fluffiness would have been great whenever it got cold. But I don't exactly want him back. This loneliness is so complicated.

—Onee-chan, I'm not as fluffy but I can help keep you warm in the cold!

Itsuki tightly hugged Fuu.

—... Thank you, Itsuki. Did you get taller?

Fuu wrapped her arms around Itsuki as well.

Karin swung her swords by the beach as the sun was setting.

—We don't know when the next call for duty might come!

She still couldn't move her body freely, after going through so much Sange. It'll take her some more time to fully recover. She was told by Taisha to continue her life as a student. However, having seen what was beyond the wall, she couldn't sit still. That's why she swung her swords with undivided attention.

—Karin-chaaaaan!!

Yuuna ran toward her from afar.

—Yuuna.

—Uwaa?!

She almost tripped again. Karin firmly supported her.

—I managed to catch you this time.

—Ehehe, thanks. I just felt slightly dizzy.

—Again? Be more careful, seriously.

—Hey, can I come over and hang out at your house today? There's no school tomorrow.

—I...IT CAN'T BE HELPED!!!

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*Era of the Gods, Year 300.*

*A new chapter is about to begin.*

*This is the story of the girls chosen by the Gods. No matter when, the Gods only have an eye for the purest of girls. And in many cases, the outcome is...*

*For human sacrifices to be abolished, and to stand up to the truth. To achieve genuine peace, not a trifling one.*

*That is the kind of heroic tale it would turn into.*

*(Epilogue : End)*

# Translation Notes

[↑\[1\]](#) 神樹様 (Shinju-sama) lit: The Divine Tree. We leave the japanese name since it is obviously a japanese God. The english term will be used when the actual tree (Shinju without the -sama suffix) is referred.

[↑\[2\]](#) 勇者御記 (Yuusha O-ki) lit: Hero's honorable record. This translation is mouthful, so we opt to "Hero's memoir" instead.

[↑\[3\]](#) 樹海 (Jukai) lit: Sea of trees. The anime translate the process of landscape transformation 樹海化 (Jukaika) as "Forestize", so one can also use the term "Forest" to translate it. To reduce confusion we decided to leave the term as is.

[↑\[4\]](#) G as in ゴキブリ (gokiburi, cockroach) [↑\[5\]](#) In the original script, this term is written as ずっと友達 (Zuttomodachi). It is a portmanteau of ずっと (Forever) and 友達 (Friends). This is a slang term in japanese and we used the equivalent english slang BFF (Best Friend Forever) to translate it.

[↑\[6\]](#) 鳴子 (Naruko). A percussion used in Yosakoi festival. It is a small wooden clappers that are held in the hands of each dancer.

[↑\[7\]](#) おもしろうてやがて悲しき鵜舟哉 (omoshiroote yagate kanashiki ubune kana). A haiku written by the poet Matsuo Basho in 1688. You can read more about the cormorant referred in the haiku [here](#).

[↑\[8\]](#) 満開 (Mankai) lit: Full Bloom [↑\[9\]](#) 散華 (Sange) lit: Wilting as flower do [↑\[10\]](#) Anno Domini (AD). "The Era of the Lord (Jesus Christ)". It is used to label or number years used with the Julian and Gregorian calendars. More specifically, the passage most likely refer to current, early 21st century, times.